Ephesians

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- **The core synopsis of the Book Ephesians**

Ephesians 1 Page 12

The chapter opens with Paul identifying himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God (v. 1) — divine appointment, not human choice. The letter is addressed to the saints (set apart for God) at Ephesus and the faithful in Christ Jesus — believers united with Christ.
Verse 2 greets them with grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ — characteristic of the New Covenant (grace = New Covenant dominion; peace = its fruit).
Verse 3 is the key summary: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.

- Not “all blessings” (indefinite), but every spiritual blessing — complete, countable, known blessings belonging to the heavenly sphere.
- These blessings are in Christ — we share them because we are united with Him (in the Beloved).
- God is first blessed (we bless Him) because He has already blessed us — the flow is from Him to us, not primarily our request to Him.
- The first three chapters focus on the Church’s collective, heavenly position; chapters 4–6 on individual responsibility to walk worthy of that calling (“noblesse oblige”).

Verses 4–14 enumerate seven spiritual blessings we share in Christ (all flowing from His position and work):

1. Chosen us in Him (v. 4) — before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.
    - Not individual election to salvation, but God’s choice of faith/believers in Christ.
    - Election is of Christ first (His pre-existence and appointment); we share it through union with Him.
2. Predestinated us unto the adoption of children (sonship / placement as sons) (v. 5) — by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.
    - Not adoption as children (we are already children by new birth), but appointment as adult heirs/sons.
    - Goal: future inheritance/share in Christ’s dominion (kingship/priestship).
3. Made us accepted in the Beloved (v. 6) — to the praise of the glory of His grace.
    - Christ was made accepted (received grace) after bearing sin and rising; we share His acceptance.
    - Purpose: display/glorify God’s grace (we are His monument of grace eternally).
4. Redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins (v. 7) — according to the riches of His grace.

    - Redemption = bought free from sin's dominion/power (not merely forgiveness of acts).
    - Blood = life (not death); Christ's risen life redeems us.
    - Forgiveness of sins (offences/transgressions) is included, but secondary to freedom from sin's rule.
5. Made known unto us the mystery of His will (vv. 8–10) — according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself.
    - Mystery = hidden in Old Testament, now revealed: gathering together in one all things in Christ (heavenly and earthly) in the dispensation of the fulness of times.
    - Our dispensation (grace/mystery) prepares heaven; the following (fulness of times) completes earth — all unto Christ's universal headship.
6. We have obtained an inheritance (vv. 11–12) — being predestinated according to His purpose.
    - First: we are His inheritance (reward/glory of Christ — "we who first trusted in Christ").
    - Old Testament promises to Israel (His inheritance) now apply to the Church (higher level: heavenly).
7. Sealed with that holy Spirit of promise (vv. 13–14) — the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory.
    - Spirit received at faith = guarantee/down-payment of full inheritance (sonship/redemption of body).
    - Earnest = first instalment assuring the rest; Spirit leads us to maturity/sonship.

Verses 15–23 transition to Paul's prayer:

- Thanks for their faith in the Lord Jesus and love unto all the saints (v. 15).
- Ceaseless prayer that God (the Father of glory) give them the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him (v. 17).
- That the eyes of their understanding be enlightened to know:
    1. The hope of His calling (future destiny/sonship).
    2. The riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints (we are His reward).
    3. The exceeding greatness of His power to us who believe — the same power that raised Christ from the dead and set Him at God's right hand (vv. 19–20).
- Christ is exalted far above all principality, power, might, dominion — Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all (vv. 21–23).

Key Overarching Themes in Ephesians 1

- Heavenly position — Believers are already blessed with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ (v. 3); seated with Him (2:6); citizenship in heaven.
- Union with Christ — All blessings are in Him — we share His election, predestination, acceptance, redemption, mystery, inheritance, Spirit.

- Grace as dominion — We live under the dispensation of the grace of God (3:2) — not law; grace abounds, makes us able, perfects strength in weakness.
- Mystery of God's will — Hidden in Old Testament, now revealed: gathering all things (heaven/earth) under Christ in the dispensation of the fulness of times.
- Church as Christ's inheritance & body — We are His reward/glory; the Church is His fulness, the organism through which He fills all.
- Prayer for enlightenment — Not for new blessings, but to know/understand what we already have — hope of calling, riches of His inheritance in us, exceeding power (resurrection power) working in us.

The chapter stresses Ephesians 1 as the foundation: the Church's heavenly, collective position in Christ (seven blessings), union with the exalted Christ, living under grace (not law), sharing His inheritance/sonship, and the Spirit as earnest until full redemption — all to the praise of God's glory. The epistle moves from doctrinal position (chs. 1–3) to worthy walk (chs. 4–6).

Ephesians 2 Page 31

The chapter delves on the exalted position of Christ (chapter 1) practically to believers: And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins (v. 1).

The natural man is dead — definitively separated from God, no communication, no fellowship, no life. "Dead in trespasses and sins" means missing the mark of fellowship with God (sin = no contact). Unbelievers are dead before God; believers are alive (reckoned by divine standard).

Verses 2–3 describe the former walk of the natural man:

- According to the course of this world (the age/cosmos ruled by Satan).
- According to the prince of the power of the air — the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience (unbelief).
- Fulfilling the lusts of our flesh and desires of the flesh and of the mind — carnal lusts and thoughts.
- By nature children of wrath (destined for wrath), even as others (Jew and Gentile alike).
  The whole old creation stands under Satan's practical dominion — through the flesh. He rules the natural man via lusts, thoughts, and the spirit of disobedience.

Verses 4–6 — the dramatic contrast: But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved), and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

- Quickened (made alive) together with Christ — already now (present tense).
- Raised up together — not future resurrection, but present spiritual position.

- Seated together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus — already now. The heaven here is the third heaven / heaven of heavens / paradise (cf. 2 Cor 12) — not far away, but extending to earth, invisible, spiritual. We are heavenly citizens now, reckoned in the unseen world, part of the new creation.

Verse 7 — purpose: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.
God displays (to principalities/powers in heavenly places) the exceeding riches of His grace through us — we are His monument of grace, eternally.
Verses 8–9 — summary: For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.
Salvation (quickening, raising, seating) is by grace (New Covenant dominion) through faith — God's gift, not human works/merit.
Verse 10 — climax: For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

- We are God's workmanship (poiema = poem, masterpiece) — created (new creation) in Christ Jesus.
- Unto good works God prepared beforehand — not to earn salvation, but to walk in them (passive/active balance).
- Good works = fruit of knowing Christ's good works; showing forth God's grace/glory (to heavenly powers); edifying the Church; serving under New Covenant.

Verses 11–13 — Gentile believers (originally "afar off") are now made nigh by the blood of Christ (Christ's life).
Formerly: without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, without God in the world (v. 12).
Now: in Christ Jesus — brought near, sharing Israel's commonwealth/blessings (higher level: heavenly).Verses 14–18 — Christ is our peace, who made both one (Jew/Gentile), broke down the middle wall of partition (law of commandments in ordinances), abolished the enmity in His flesh, reconciled both unto God in one body by the cross (slain the enmity), and preached peace to those afar off and nigh.
Through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father (v. 18).Verses 19–22 — result: no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone (v. 20).
In Him the building is fitly framed together and groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord (v. 21); ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit (v. 22).
The Church = spiritual temple/habitation of God — living stones fitted to Christ the Cornerstone/Foundation.
Key Overarching Themes in Ephesians 2

- From death to life — Natural man dead (separated, no fellowship) under Satan/flesh → quickened/raised/seated together with Christ in heavenly places (present reality).
- Grace as dominion — Saved by grace through faith (gift, not works); we live under grace (New Covenant), not law (Old Covenant enmity/wall abolished).
- Unity in Christ — Jew/Gentile made one new man; one body; reconciled to God and each other; access by one Spirit unto the Father.
- Church as God's workmanship/temple — Created in Christ unto good works God ordained; growing into holy temple / habitation of God; we are His masterpiece/monument of grace.
- Heavenly citizenship — Not future hope only — already seated in heavenly places; commonwealth of Israel now shared on higher (heavenly) level.
- Good works — Not to earn salvation, but fruit of union with Christ; prepared beforehand; walk in them; display God's grace/glory (to heavenly powers).

Ephesians 2 is the practical application of chapter 1: believers — once dead under Satan/flesh/law — are now quickened, raised, seated together with the exalted Christ in the heavenlies (present position). Grace abolishes enmity (law), creates one new man (Church as Christ's body/temple), and calls us to walk in good works God prepared — displaying His exceeding grace to heavenly powers and building up the spiritual habitation of God.

Ephesians 3: Page 48

The chapter continues directly from chapter 2: the building of the Church as God's spiritual temple/habitation. Paul calls himself the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles (v. 1) — imprisoned because he willed it and God willed it; "prison" = exile/captivity in Jewish thought. The Church (priestly people, one Body) is in exile during the 2000 years from Christ's resurrection to His return (Paul's two years in prison picture this dispensation).

Verses 2–5 — Paul reminds them of the dispensation of the grace of God given to him for the Gentiles (v. 2). By revelation Christ made known to him the mystery (v. 3; cf. earlier brief mention). When they read, they can understand his knowledge in the mystery of Christ (v. 4). This mystery — hidden in other ages — is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit (v. 5). Not new invention, but the unveiling of what was concealed in Scripture.

Verse 6 — core of the mystery: That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel.

- Gentiles (especially ten tribes/Israelites in dispersion) now fellowheirs with believing Jews.
- Of the same body (one people/temple).

- Partakers of his promise (originally to Israel) in Christ through the gospel.

Verses 7–9 — Paul became a minister of this gospel according to the gift of the grace of God given by His power (v. 7). He is less than the least of all saints, yet this grace was given him to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ (v. 8) — riches hidden in Old Testament but now unveiled. His task: to make all men see what is the fellowship [dispensation/oikonomia] of the mystery, hidden from the beginning of the world in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ (v. 9).

Verse 10 — ultimate purpose: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold [multicoloured] wisdom of God.

- The Church now displays God's variegated wisdom to heavenly beings (principalities/powers).
- We are God's monument/testimony in the heavenlies — priestly function to show forth His grace/wisdom.

Verse 11 — all according to the eternal purpose God purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord — not plan B after Israel's unbelief, but fixed from eternity.

Verse 12 — in Him we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him (His faithfulness) — we draw near to God boldly (priestly access).

Verse 13 — Paul desires they faint not at his tribulations for them (which is their glory) — his suffering is part of making the mystery known.

Verses 14–19 — Paul's prayer: he bows his knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named (v. 14–15).

- That God would grant them — according to the riches of his glory — to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man (v. 16).
- That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; rooted and grounded in love (v. 17).
- That they may be able to comprehend (make their own) with all saints the breadth, length, depth, height (v. 18) — and know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge (v. 19a).
- That they might be filled with all the fulness of God (v. 19b) — Christ dwelling in them; God's fulness expressed through the Church.

Verses 20–21 — doxology: to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen (vv. 20–21).

- God's power in us exceeds our prayers/thoughts.
- Glory to Him in the church — we are His monument of grace, displaying His wisdom/love/power eternally.

Key Overarching Themes in Ephesians 3

- Mystery unveiled — Gentiles fellowheirs/same body/partakers of promise — hidden in God/Old Testament, now revealed to apostles/prophets by the Spirit.
- Paul's unique ministry — grace given him to preach unsearchable riches of Christ to Gentiles; make all see the dispensation of the mystery.

- Church’s priestly testimony — displays God’s multicoloured wisdom to principalities/powers in heavenly places — we are God’s eternal monument of grace.
- Eternal purpose — Fixed in Christ from eternity — not plan B after Israel’s rejection.
- Bold access — Through Christ’s faithfulness we draw near to God with confidence (priestly privilege).
- Prayer for inner strengthening — Spirit’s might in the inner man → Christ dwelling by faith → comprehension of Christ’s love → filled with God’s fulness.
- Doxology of exceeding power — God does far above what we ask/think; glory in the Church by Christ forever.

Ephesians 3 is the heart of the mystery and its Paul’s calling to unveil the hidden truth (Gentiles sharing Israel’s commonwealth on a higher/heavenly level), the Church’s priestly role displaying God’s wisdom to heavenly powers, bold access to God through Christ’s faithfulness, and Paul’s prayer for inner strengthening so Christ dwells in us and we are filled with God’s fulness — all to His eternal glory in the Church.

Ephesians 4 Page 65
Ephesians 4 marks the practical turning point: after three chapters on the Church’s collective, heavenly position (blessed/seated in Christ, one new man/temple), the final three chapters address individual responsibility to walk worthy of that vocation (calling/destiny) (v. 1). Paul again calls himself the prisoner of the Lord (v. 1) — the Church (and believers) are “prisoners of Christ,” withdrawn from normal society (exile/captivity), placed outside the world, stripped of earthly civil rights in God’s reckoning. This is noblesse oblige: nobility (heavenly position/sonship) obliges worthy conduct.
Verse 2 — walk with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love.
- Lowliness/meekness/longsuffering concern the mind/disposition (thinking → receptivity → patience/hope).
- Meekness = believingness/openness to God’s Word.
- Forbearing one another in love = patient endurance/forgiveness in fellowship.

Verse 3 — Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
- Unity already exists (Spirit-made); we keep (preserve/live) it — not create it.
- Bond of peace = covenant/union of peace (New Covenant fruit).

Verses 4–6 — sevenfold basis of unity:
- One body, one Spirit, one hope of calling (sonship/inheritance).
- One Lord, one faith, one baptism.
- One God and Father of all (above/through/in you all).
  All flows from union with Christ/Spirit.

Verse 7 — unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

- Grace = gift/responsibility (not natural ability).
- Different measures → different functions/responsibilities in the Body.
- Measured by faithfulness/ability (cf. Romans 12:3 “measure of faith”).

Verses 8–10 — quotation from Psalm 68:18 (“When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men”).

- Christ’s descent (incarnation/humiliation) → ascent (resurrection/exaltation).
- Led captivity captive = Church (believers) already reckoned as captives of Christ, seated with Him in heavenlies (withdrawn from world).
- Gifts = responsibilities/functions given to members of the Body.

Verses 11–12 — He gave:

- some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers.
- Purpose: perfecting (maturing) of saints, work of ministry, edifying of the Body of Christ.
- Apostles/prophets = foundation-layers (first generation; unveiled mystery).
- Evangelists/teachers remain (outward/inward ministry of Word).

Verse 13 — till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

- Unity of faith = one shared faith in the same truth (Christ).
- Knowledge of Son of God = fellowship/identification with living Christ.
- Perfect man = mature Church/Body (singular) growing to Christ’s full stature.

Verse 14 — no longer children (minors/immature), tossed to and fro by every wind/current of doctrine, sleight/craftiness of men who lie in wait to deceive.

- Immature = susceptible to doctrinal currents/hypes (human philosophy/craftiness).
- Maturity = steadfast in truth, not drifting.

Verses 15–16 — speaking the truth in love, grow up into Him (Head, Christ) in all things.

- Whole Body fitly joined/connected, compacted by every joint supplying (each part’s measure/function).
- Effectual working → increase/edifying of Body in love (fellowship/service).

Verses 17–19 — walk not as other Gentiles in vanity of mind, darkened understanding, alienated from life of God through ignorance/blindness of heart, past feeling, given over to lasciviousness/uncleanness with greediness.

- Natural man ruled by Satan through flesh/mind → corruption/death.
- Believers must reject that walk (no communication/fellowship with God).

Verses 20–24 — ye have not so learned Christ (v. 20) — truth is in Jesus (v. 21).

- Put off old man (corrupt by deceitful lusts) (v. 22).
- Be renewed in spirit of mind (v. 23).
- Put on new man created after God in righteousness/true holiness (v. 24).
- Not mere new birth, but practical outworking: old man put off → new man put on through renewed mind.

Verses 25–32 — practical exhortations flowing from new man:

- Put away lying → speak truth (members one of another) (v. 25).
- Be angry & sin not; let not sun go down on wrath → give no place to devil (vv. 26–27).
- Steal no more → labour to give to him that needeth (v. 28).
- No corrupt communication → good to edify, minister grace (v. 29).
- Grieve not Holy Spirit (by whom sealed unto day of redemption) (v. 30).
- Put away bitterness/wrath/anger/clamour/evil speaking/malice (v. 31).
- Be kind/tenderhearted, forgiving one another even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you (v. 32).

Key Overarching Themes in Ephesians 4

- Worthy walk — Walk worthy of heavenly vocation/calling (sonship/inheritance); noblesse oblige — position demands conduct.
- Unity of Spirit — Already exists (one Body/Spirit/hope/Lord/faith/baptism/God); keep/preserve it in bond of peace (New Covenant fruit).
- Gifts as responsibilities — Grace/gifts measured by faithfulness/ability; apostles/prophets (foundation), evangelists/teachers (Word ministry) → perfecting saints, edifying Body.
- Maturity vs. childishness — Grow into Christ (perfect man/Body); no longer tossed by doctrinal currents/craftiness; renewed mind → steadfast in truth/love.
- Put off old / put on new — Old man (corrupt/vain mind) → renewed mind → new man (created after God in righteousness/holiness).
- Practical outworking — Truth in love, anger without sin, honest labour, edifying speech, no grieving Spirit, kindness/forgiveness mirroring God's forgiveness in Christ.

Ephesians 4 emphasis is the practical outworking of chapters 1–3: believers, already seated in heavenlies as Christ's Body/temple, must walk worthy of that calling — keeping Spirit-unity, growing to maturity (perfect man), putting off old man (vanity/corruption) and putting on new man (righteousness/holiness) through renewed mind — bearing measured responsibilities/gifts for edifying the Body in love, displaying grace, and refusing place to devil.

Ephesians 5 Page 86

Ephesians 5 continues with the practical outworking from chapter 4: believers must walk worthy of their heavenly calling. The chapter opens with Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children (v. 1) — following

God is identical to following Christ. Children naturally follow their Father; we are dear children (beloved sons/heirs) and therefore imitate Him.
Verse 2 — walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.

- Christ's love for us (the Church) is the pattern — not merely His death, but His present self-giving/devotion to the Church.
- Offering/sacrifice = voluntary presentation (not sin/trespass offering); a sweetsmelling savour (burnt/meat/thank offering) pictures resurrection life/devotion, not death.
- Christ limits Himself/devotes Himself to the Church (at cost of other things, e.g., revealing His kingdom/glory now) — the husband should mirror this self-giving love.

Verses 3–5 — fornication, uncleanness, covetousness (and related vices: filthiness, foolish talking, jesting) must not be once named among saints (v. 3–4).

- These = self-seeking/ego-centered life (idolatry, v. 5).
- No inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God for those who live this way (v. 5) — not loss of salvation (eternal life), but loss of sonship/inheritance (appointment as heir/co-ruler with Christ).
- Believers enter the kingdom by faith; inheritance is earned by faithful walk/fruit.

Verses 6–7 — Let no man deceive you with vain words: these things bring wrath of God upon the children of disobedience (v. 6). Be not ye partakers with them (v. 7).

- Warning against false teaching that downplays sin/self-seeking.
- Wrath still comes (future judgment on works); believers must separate from such walk.

Verses 8–10 — ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light (v. 8).

- Fruit of the Light = goodness, righteousness, truth (v. 9).
- Proving (testing/approving) what is acceptable unto the Lord (v. 10) — walk discerns God's will.

Verses 11–14 — have no fellowship with unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them (v. 11).

- Reprove = expose/manifest by light (v. 13) — not fight/punish, but bring to light (truth exposes darkness).
- Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light (v. 14) — quotation from Isaiah 60:1 (New Covenant light/glory); applied to believers rising from spiritual death to walk in Christ's light/life.

Verses 15–17 — walk circumspectly (cautiously/looking ahead), not as fools, but as wise (v. 15).

- Redeeming the time (buying back opportunity), because days are evil (v. 16).
- Be not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is (v. 17) — wisdom discerns God's will.

Verse 18 — be not drunk with wine (excess), but be filled with the Spirit.

- Wine = type of Spirit/life (New Covenant); drunkenness = losing control.
- Be filled (controlled/overflowing) with the Spirit — our responsibility (not passive waiting).

Verses 19–20 — result of Spirit-filling:

- Speaking to yourselves in psalms/hymns/spiritual songs (v. 19).
- Singing/making melody in your heart to the Lord.
- Giving thanks always for all things unto God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (v. 20).
- Spirit-filled life = worship, thanksgiving, mutual edification — out of fullness, not lack.

Verse 21 — Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God — mutual submission flows from reverence for God; heading for household codes.

Verses 22–24 — Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord (v. 22).

- Husband = head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church and saviour of the body (v. 23).
- As church submits to Christ, so wives to husbands in every thing (v. 24).
- Pattern: Christ/Church → husband/wife (not vice versa).

Verses 25–27 — Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it (v. 25).

- Christ's self-giving/devotion to Church = pattern for husbands.
- Purpose: sanctify and cleanse Church with the washing of water by the word (v. 26) — present cleansing/sanctifying work of Christ (Word/Spirit).
- Present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle — holy and without blemish (v. 27).

Verses 28–30 — Husbands should love wives as their own bodies — he that loves his wife loves himself (v. 28).

- No man hates his own flesh; he nourishes and cherishes it, even as the Lord the church (v. 29).
- We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones (v. 30) — Church = Christ's own body/flesh/bones (Gen 2 typology).

Verses 31–32 — For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh (v. 31; Gen 2:24).

- This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church (v. 32).
- Marriage = profound picture of Christ/Church union (one flesh); Christ left Father to join Church.

Verse 33 — summary: let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

- Husbands: love (self-giving). Wives: reverence/submit (respect/authority).

Key Overarching Themes in Ephesians 5

- Imitate God/Christ — Walk in love as dear children; follow Christ's self-giving love for Church.

- Light vs. Darkness — Once darkness, now light in the Lord; walk as children of light (goodness/righteousness/truth); expose/reprove works of darkness by light.
- Spirit-filled life — Be filled with the Spirit (not wine/excess) → worship (psalms/hymns/songs), thanksgiving, mutual edification.
- Christ/Church as Marriage Pattern — Christ loves/gives Himself to Church (sanctifies/cleanses by Word); Church submits to Christ.
    - Husbands: love wives as own bodies (nourish/cherish). Wives: submit/reverence husbands.
    - Marriage = great mystery picturing Christ/Church (one flesh; Gen 2 applied to Christ/Church).
- Inheritance & Judgment — Self-seeking (fornication/uncleanness/covetousness/idolatry) loses inheritance (sonship/glory) in kingdom — not salvation, but reward.
- Practical walk — Redeem time (evil days); understand Lord's will; speak truth/edify; forgive as God forgave in Christ.

Ephesians 5 is the climax of the practical outworking: believers imitate God/Christ in love (self-giving, not self-seeking); walk as light (exposing darkness); be Spirit-filled (worship/thanksgiving); and model marriage after Christ/Church (husband's sacrificial love, wife's submission/reverence) — all flowing from our heavenly position and leading to inheritance/sonship in the kingdom.

Ephesians 6 Page 102

Ephesians 6 concludes the practical section (chs. 4–6) on walking worthy of the heavenly calling. It addresses ordinary daily relationships (family, work) as the primary sphere of serving God, then shifts to spiritual warfare.

Verses 1–4 — Household order in the Lord:

- Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right (v. 1).
    - Obedience flows from submission to the Lord; applies especially to children of believers.
- Honour thy father and mother — first commandment with promise: that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth (vv. 2–3; Exod 20:12).
    - Promise still valid: obedience brings blessing/health/long life (practical outworking of New Covenant grace).
- Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (v. 4).
    - Authority must not exasperate; upbringing = nurture (care/provision) and admonition (Lord's instruction/Words).
    - Parents bear responsibility; children identified with believing parents (reckoned in the Church).

Verses 5–9 — Servants (employees) & masters (employers) in the flesh:

- Servants, be obedient… with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, as unto Christ (v. 5).
    - Not eyeservice/menpleasers, but as servants of Christ, doing God's will from the heart (v. 6).

        - With good will as to the Lord, not men (v. 7).
        - Reward: whatever good done, receive of the Lord — bond or free (v. 8).
    - Masters, do the same… forbearing threatening (v. 9).
        - Your Master in heaven shows no respect of persons.
        - Hierarchy exists in the flesh, but all accountable to one Lord — mutual responsibility/fairness under Christ.

Verses 10–20 — Spiritual warfare: Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might (v. 10).

- Warfare not against flesh and blood, but principalities, powers, rulers of darkness, spiritual wickedness in high places (v. 12).
- Put on the whole armour of God to stand against devil's wiles (v. 11) and withstand in the evil day (v. 13).
- Armour (Christ Himself):
    - Loins girt with truth (v. 14).
    - Breastplate of righteousness (v. 14).
    - Feet shod with preparation of gospel of peace (v. 15).
    - Shield of faith — quenches fiery darts (v. 16).
    - Helmet of salvation (v. 17).
    - Sword of the Spirit — Word of God (v. 17).
- Praying always with all prayer/supplication in the Spirit, watching with perseverance for all saints (v. 18).
- For Paul: utterance… boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel (v. 19) — ambassador in bonds (v. 20).

Verses 21–24 — Closing greetings:

- Tychicus (beloved brother/faithful minister) will make known Paul's affairs and comfort hearts (vv. 21–22).
- Peace… and love with faith from God the Father and Lord Jesus Christ (v. 23).
- Grace with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity (v. 24).
    - Final blessing to those who serve/love Christ sincerely — not all believers indiscriminately.

Key Overarching Themes in Ephesians 6

- Ordinary life as service — Family/work relationships (children/parents, servants/masters) are primary sphere of serving God — hierarchy exists in flesh but all accountable to one Lord (no partiality).
- Spiritual warfare — Not against flesh/blood, but heavenly powers (principalities, darkness); stand in Christ's victory (already won).
- Whole armour = Christ — Truth, righteousness, gospel-peace, faith, salvation, Word — put on Lord Jesus; defensive (stand/resist), offensive (sword = Word).
- Prayer & perseverance — Always in Spirit, for all saints; Paul asks boldness to preach mystery of gospel despite bonds.
- Grace & love to faithful — Final blessing to those who love/serve Christ sincerely — peace/love/faith/grace for true servants.

This chapter emphasizes Ephesians 6 as the climax touching ordinary life (family/work) valued as true service to God; spiritual warfare requires

strength in the Lord (Christ's armour = Himself); stand in victory already won; pray for boldness to proclaim mystery; grace/peace to those who sincerely love/serve Christ. The epistle closes with Tychicus' mission and a benediction for faithful servants.

Ephesians 1:1
"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:"
The key components is

- Paul the author identifies himself as an apostle—a "sent one" commissioned directly by Jesus Christ.
- He states authority and his office is held "by the will of God," emphasizing divine appointment rather than human choice.
- The recipients of the letter is addressed to the "saints" at Ephesus and the "faithful in Christ Jesus," terms that describe those set apart for God and committed to their union with Christ

The first three chapters of Ephesians focus on the Church as such, "and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:6), and on things that apply to every member of the Church. This begins with the seven "spiritual blessings in Christ", namely:

God has chosen us in Christ.
God has predestinated us unto the adoption of children.
God has made us accepted in Christ.
God has redeemed us from the power of sin and forgiven our sins.
God has made known unto us the mystery of his will.
God has made us an inheritance in Christ.
God has given us the promise of an inheritance. Eph. 1:5-9

The last three chapters deal with the individual responsibility of the believer to live in a manner worthy of a certain destiny, and this is therefore largely synonymous with the term "predestinated" from chapter 1. We do not walk in order to receive a calling. No, it is the other way round: "noblesse oblige". It is a French expression that means that nobility extends beyond mere entitlement, requiring people who hold such status to fulfil social responsibilities; How much responsibility we bear is determined by God. If we are strong believers, then we receive great responsibility. If I substitute the word "faithfulness" for "faith", the thought is: according to the measure in which we are faithful, He will give us responsibility. We were by nature unprofitable (Romans 3:12: "They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one."), but we have now been made useful and capable. The intention is that we should now serve God. Since the work of God consists in building up the Church, we should contribute to that. In that Body of Christ we have, by grace, received an appointment to a function (a "gift"). This is therefore not the ability to do something specific. It concerns the responsibility to do it. The gifts are for the work of service, "to the work of the ministry". That is for the building up (edifying)

of the Body of Christ. 1 Corinthians 14:12: “Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.” Where we have become useful, we are involved in this one work that God is doing in our days. As members of this organism, we are expected to know our place in it and to bear our responsibility. And that “to the measure” in which we have received that personal responsibility. No more and no less. In practice, as individual believers, we should come to know our ministry, know what we stand for, and for what the Lord wants to use us.

After mentioning the sender, in whose service he stands, and that this is “by the will of God”, and then naming the recipients of the letter—“the saints”, as believers in Christ Jesus are called—the verse 3 serves as the introduction to verses 4 through 14. By faith, the born-again children of God have become one with Christ. They are in Christ, who is holy, and therefore believers are holy and are occasionally called “saints”.

What is distinctive about the Epistle is that it begins with a summary of what precedes. Then the Apostle speaks of his prayer for the Ephesians, and after that he takes up the thread of his main subject, beginning with a description of the position of Christ in the last verses of chapter 1. This is followed by the practical consequences, which form the actual content of the Epistle.

The Epistle to the Ephesians speaks of the position of believers in our days, awaiting the return of Christ, with the theme that believers today, regardless of whether they were perhaps originally Gentiles, have come to share in the blessings promised to Israel. But then on a higher level. The believer is namely “made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:6) and is “blessed. . . with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (verse 3). It speaks of the heavenly position of the believer since his new birth. The Epistle to the Ephesians begins by saying that we, as the Epistle to the Romans says, are one in Christ, but then in heaven. That we are united with the living Christ, who has received a position, inheritance, kingdom, throne, and crown in heaven itself.

Ephesians 1:2

2 Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul greets these believers, saints in Christ Jesus, with a very common greeting. Most of Paul’s letters begin in this way, and Peter also opens his epistle with “grace and peace from God”. The Jews greet one another with “shalom”, which means “peace”. The usual Greek greeting is “grace”. In the Bible, grace is the designation for the New Covenant, and peace is characteristic of the New Covenant. One wishes the other the New Covenant, but it says “grace and peace be unto you from God”, and that can only come to man through the New Covenant. Grace and peace stand opposed to the law, for the law is the Old Covenant and the conflict that goes with it. God’s will is that in the practical outworking of our lives, as believers—namely as saints in Christ Jesus—we should live under the New Covenant.

Ephesians 1:3
3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.
“All spiritual blessing” is perfectly correct, but the problem is that it is outdated English, for if we insist on keeping “blessing” in the singular, we no longer use the word “all”, but “every”. The translation with “blessing” in the singular is correct. “All spiritual blessings” is indefinite. Those blessings are all there, not one is missing. But at the same time it means: we do not know how many or which they are. It must be “every”, because that also implies that not one is lacking. Moreover, it means that we know which they are and that they can therefore be counted. (Hymn 256: “Count your blessings”)
In verses 4 through 14, we find a series of seven spiritual blessings in which we have come to share in Christ.
God is an abstract concept, but here it is said who He is: God, who is our Father. He gives us that grace and peace because He is our Father. We have received life from Him, and He then gives us everything we need for that life. Or as Peter puts it:
2 Peter 1:3
According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue;
Just as the Father cares for His Son, so He cares for all who have a share in Christ and on that basis are children of God, who grow up to be “sons”, that is, heirs. In that sense God is our Father. Not just a theory, but a practical truth. We live from His hand.
The whole point is that God gave and gives His life and His blessings to the Lord Jesus Christ. Since we are united with Christ, we therefore receive it from or through Him. This is a very important truth in the rest of the Epistle, but certainly in the following 14 verses. The truth, namely, that whoever we are and whatever we have, it is so because we have a share in Christ. If we receive anything from God, we have received it from Christ, and vice versa. Serving God can only be through the Lord Jesus Christ, the High Priest of the New Covenant. God cannot serve us, as far as necessary, outside the Lord Jesus. There are people who say: I believe in God, but not in Jesus. That is nonsense, of course. For then they do not know who God is, nor who Jesus is. If one does not believe in Jesus, then one does not believe in God.
We thought that God would bless us, but in verse 3 it says that we bless God. In line with that: we thought that God would serve us. But the intention is that we should serve Him. Because He has blessed us, we should bless Him. Because He has sanctified us, we should sanctify Him in our lives. Because He has exalted us, we should exalt Him in our lives. Or with a somewhat difficult term: because He has blessed us, we should bless Him. That is the important thrust of the verse. The main clause is not that God “hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ”, but the main thought is: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”. In the subordinate clause follows the reason, the

“because”: “who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ”. He has accomplished that in the past, and we now live in possession of these spiritual blessings. God has given it to us, and we do not need to ask for it.

Insofar as we are in Christ, God is also our Father and the One from whose hand we live. We have received grace and peace from God through the Lord Jesus Christ. The thought is that God first gave grace and peace to His Son. He received grace under the New Covenant because He “was made sin for us” (2 Corinthians 5:21: “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him”), bore the sin of the world, and therefore died. His resurrection from the dead is God’s grace. The peace of the New Covenant He received at the end of the conflict against sin, against the dominion of the law and darkness.

The point is that in verse 3 not everything is lumped together, as if all spiritual blessings and which they are you can just figure out. It is a deliberate enumeration of seven blessings. If you can find more in your Bible, they form part of one of these seven main points. Not one is missing, and they are not just any blessings—no, it says: “all spiritual blessings”, that is to say, blessings invisible to the natural man, which have to do with our present dispensation. In this time we do not receive every bodily blessing from God, although there is certainly material (visible) blessing, but that is reserved for the future. We have this promise in Philippians 3.

Philippians 3:21

Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

Insofar as we have a share in the work of God, it remains invisible and therefore spiritual. At the return of Christ, many of those invisible things will be made visible.

The “in Christ” in verse 3 expresses that we are united with Christ. The Greek expression has a somewhat broader meaning than our English expression. The “in” (Greek: “ἐν”) expresses a union that cannot be broken. They belong together. That is why this Epistle says that we are “in Christ”, or “in the Beloved”, or “in Him”. Or vice versa: “Christ is in us”. So it is on another occasion. In both cases it expresses the same thing, namely our union with Christ.

The whole natural humanity is designated by the name “Adam”. The name of the original progenitor is used for all his descendants. In the same way, the name of Christ is used for all who are in Christ and have thus received the life of Christ through new birth. They are called Christians. That is still weakly expressed, for in fact they are called “Christ”, because He is the Head of the Body, the Church as a whole. Where “Christ” stands in the Bible, in reality it refers not only to the Lord Jesus, but even to the whole Church.

With Him we have received blessings in heaven. That may seem difficult, but actually it is not so bad. This expression, as translated here, is not exactly as it stands. It does not say “in heaven” nor “in the heavenly

places” (newer translations). What stands in the Greek can be well translated into English as “in the heavenly” (English: “heavenly”). We find exactly the same expression in John 3:12. There it appears that where “heavenly” stands, it concerns “heavenly things”. And that again means all things that belong to heaven.
The whole point is that we—as believers in our days—have not only come to share in Christ, but also in His position in heaven. Heavenly citizenship, then. That is an exceptional situation, because if after the rapture of the Church people come to faith again, beginning with the Jewish people and then the nations of the earth, they do not go to heaven. Those believers then are not firstfruits; we are. We cannot do anything about that. It simply has to do with the year, and thus the dispensation, in which we live. Believers from our dispensation (the fifth) go to heaven, and indeed immediately as they are born again on the basis of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. All other believers go, after the Last Day, to a New Earth.
That means that in verse 3 it is not just a cry when it says “hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places”. It describes the exceptional position of believers from our present dispensation. They are “heavenly citizens”, for our citizenship is in heaven, the “third heaven”, the “heaven of heavens”, “paradise” (2 Corinthians 12:4: “How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter”), there where Christ is. It is more than just a place. It concerns things that belong there. That belong to it. That heaven does not belong to creation. It is higher in rank, but it extends down to the earth. That heaven is therefore in our midst. Insofar as we are believers, we are in that heaven, and it is not so far. Not in metres anyway, but in rank, which is higher.
You must therefore know that you already have these seven spiritual blessings, in order then also to live out of them. For as far as the second part of verse 3 is concerned, we should ask: which blessings are those then? Then the Apostle says: “such as. . .” . Only he does not use “such as”, but the word “according as”, but that is the same, for example in “according as he hath chosen us”, in verse 4.
Ephesians 1:4 (blessing 1)

Ephesians 1:4
4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:
The first blessing in this enumeration reaches very far back, namely to “before the foundation” (literally, the “throwing down” or “overthrow”) “of the world”. Through two expressions in this one sentence, a reference is made far into the past. Firstly, through the words “he hath chosen us”. This has absolutely nothing to do with the traditional church doctrine of election. Nor does it have anything to do with the reasoning that, now that the clock has stopped for Israel, God is gathering the Church out of the nations by choosing people who then become believers and are saved. Those are then elected, and God has not elected others. There is nothing to be done about it. The strange idea is that whoever has heard the Gospel and come to faith has done so because God arranged it that way.

For the others He did not arrange it, but that will come right later. For usually the reasoning is continued with a story meant to show that in the future, after all, every person will one day be saved. This is known as “the doctrine of universal reconciliation”. I am accused of preaching that, whereas I have opposed and refuted it for years.
None of this is found in Ephesians 1:4. In both cases it is unbiblical. For the Bible nowhere teaches that God elects people to be saved. God never elects people to come to faith. God does not give a person faith. That is the greatest nonsense there is. It is a teaching of the devil. God requires of man only faith—that you believe what God has said. Man need only submit to the Word of God and nothing else. From the prophets of the Old Testament onwards, the Bible is full of calls from God’s side to man to submit to His Word. To believe. To choose for Him and thereby for life. Wherever the Bible speaks of election, it is explicitly stated that God does not choose the man—that is, not the outward man, not the person, not what he does or who he is by nature. None of that plays any role. Scripture teaches that God elects faith. And thereby He elects every believer. God says: I choose all believers. Not on the basis of their works, but on the basis of what is in their heart. On the basis of their faith. On the basis of whether My Word is in it. Then I will give them eternal life.
We have the example of Abraham. His history of faith in what God spoke to him is found in Genesis 12. In Hebrews 11 we read why God chose Abraham: “By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed…” (Hebrews 11:8). Here is the whole sequence. He believed, and therefore God called him. Because he believed and because God called him, Abraham obeyed and acted accordingly. He went to a land without knowing where he would come. In Hebrews many more examples of faith are mentioned. God has made His choice. He chooses all believers, and then the choice is ours. If we choose for the Lord, we have a share in His election. If we reject Him, then we do not.
It does not say here that God hath chosen us before the foundation of the world. That is how it is often quoted, belonging to the philosophy about God’s foreknowledge—namely that God has already chosen you before you were born. But here it says: “…according as he hath chosen us in him”. So in Christ, for God chose Him long ago. (See also John 17:5, 24). When the Bible speaks of “election before the foundation of the world”, it is not speaking of our election, but of the election of the Lord Jesus Christ. That election took place before “the foundation of the world”, but we came to share in that election when we came to faith. It is no more difficult than that. It is not explained at length here, because this was already done in the Epistle to the Romans. And also in the Epistle to the Galatians, which immediately precedes this one, where it is explained very fully and in great detail—also on the basis of Old Testament statements and events—that it has never been otherwise. God elects faith.
Exactly the same will apply to Israel. In the future all Israel shall be saved (Romans 11), but only on the basis of faith. Romans 11 says “and so all Israel shall be saved”. How? “If they abide not still in unbelief”. If they come to faith, therefore. Although it is added that it will then still be only a

remnant, for not every Israelite will come to faith. Only believers remain, and that “according to the election of grace” (Romans 11:5).
So it does not say: according as He who hath chosen us before the foundation of the world. It says: according as he hath chosen us in him. It does not say: according as He hath chosen us to be in him. It simply says that we are blessed in him with every spiritual blessing. Since we are in him, we therefore have a share in all those spiritual blessings. Since then we have been chosen in him. The Bible therefore does not teach that God elects people to come to faith. The Bible teaches that when a person has come to faith, he has a share in God’s election.
Regarding the expression “in love” at the end of verse 4, people can never agree whether it actually belongs to the previous verse or still to this one. As far as I am concerned, it remains as it stands. We should be holy and without blame in love. Not according to human standards or human judgement, but according to divine standards or the standards of Christ, for that is what it is about. The purpose of the work of the Spirit in us, and possibly through us, is that we should be holy and without blame. The intention is that the work of God in these days should take shape in us. God is doing something—not in or to the world, but in, or to, or through, the Church. It is a work of sanctifying, cleansing, making blameless.
For believers this is often problematic, because many—I know not on what grounds—have the impression that it should be their own work, namely to sanctify themselves, to cleanse themselves, to present themselves without spot or wrinkle before the face of God. Scripture, however, teaches exactly the opposite. It is not we who should do it; Christ should do it. We should let it be done, by Him namely. What is expected of us is that we surrender to that work of God and make ourselves available for it. That is what it is about.

Ephesians 1:5 (blessing 2)
5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,
God has also—again beforehand—“predestinated us unto the adoption of children” (Greek: huiothesia, G5206), by Jesus Christ, even “to himself”, and “according to the good pleasure of his will”. God has therefore done yet something else, besides the election in verse 4.
One might distinguish between what is called “election” in verse 4 and what in verse 5 is “predestination”. For some reason these seem to be the same in present-day usage, and in theological usage as far as I know also, but in the Bible, in the original language, and even in English, they are two opposite concepts. “Election” has to do with the past, the origin. “Predestination”, has to do with the future. To predestinate is the Greek “orizo”, which we know in “horizon”. It expresses the goal or the destiny. That is all; it goes no further. As far as one can see, one looks no further than the end. Verse 4 therefore speaks of how the present situation of believers has come about, on the basis of the election of God’s grace. Verse 5 speaks of where it is heading—in plain English, what the intention, what the ultimate goal of it is—namely “the adoption of children” (or “sonship”, “placement as sons”).

He has “predestinated us” to a certain destiny, and that destiny is called “placement as sons”, or “sonship”, for in Greek it is one word, namely huiothesia. Following on from His work in the past—the election—is “sonship” His work that He wants to do in us today and in the future. That “placement as son” is then at once the end of the development here described.
One becomes a “son” by placement (appointment). (Genesis 15) God wants to appoint us as sons; it is not about “adoption as children”. That cannot be, for we are already children of God on the basis of new birth and not on the basis that He has “adopted” us as children. The purpose of children in general is that they should be appointed as sons, as adult heirs. Since we are children of God, the intention is that we should become sons. But not all children always become sons. Not all children inherit. In the Bible we have many examples of that. Ishmael was indeed a child of Abraham, but he was not appointed as “son” (heir). Esau was a child of Isaac, but he was not appointed as son. The same applied to Reuben, as the firstborn child of Jacob. He too was not appointed as son, even though his name means “see, a son”. The appointment as son is the final and ultimate fulfilment of the right of inheritance.
That sonship is the “appointment as firstborn”, by which “the church of the firstborn” is formed. Hebrews 12:23: “…the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven…” This means that there are also others besides firstborn ones. In the future there will still be another believing people. That arises from the preaching of the Gospel to the nations, with the ultimate result being the establishment and revelation of this promised Kingdom from an earthly Jerusalem, the city of David. Where that future expectation is not held, a statement like “church of the firstborn” no longer means anything. One would then see the distinction between the present-day Church, with a heavenly destiny, and the believers after the rapture of the Church.
That sonship takes place “by Jesus Christ”, or “in Jesus Christ”. Although it does not say so here, it was already stated in verse 3.
Christ Himself was called to an inheritance, to sonship, and in the past, after He had run His “course of faith”, He was appointed as Son. So the Bible tells it. At any rate in Psalm 2:7: “Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee”, quoted in Hebrews 1:5. In Acts 13:33 the apostle Paul quotes these words and says that this was fulfilled on the day of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Then God officially appointed Him as Heir and really subjected all things to Him. According to Hebrews 1, Christ is set as Heir of the universe, above the angels; higher there is none. And thus at the right hand of God. If we shall judge angels in the future (1 Corinthians 6:3), that can only be because we “are blessed… with all spiritual blessings in Christ”. Because we thus have a share in Him, we are members of His Body. We shall “inherit the universe with Him”.
Romans 8:30
Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

We are already glorified! Wherever we as children of God live in dependence on Him and serve Him, we already now share in His glory. We do not yet see it, but it will be revealed to us (Romans 8:18). It is already there; we just do not see it yet. We are on the way to this revelation, the sonship. Since we “are blessed… with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ”, the intention is that we too, after running the course, should be appointed as sons. We should run the course of faith and not wrestle against flesh and blood, but stand against principalities, powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places (Ephesians 6). “According to the good pleasure of his will” indicates that it is not a question of what our will is, but of God’s will. We so often have the problem that we have a certain will and hope that God will carry it out, whereas in reality it is about God’s will, to which we should submit. This is repeated many times in many places in Scripture. So also here in verse 5, for we are called, according to Romans 8, to be appointed as sons in the future, according to the good pleasure of God’s will.

Ephesians 1:6 (blessing 3)
To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.
From this statement, here in this verse, but also from what follows further, it is clear that it concerns the grace from which we now live day by day. Not only the grace that became our portion when we came to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. All the work that the Lord is doing today flows from His grace, from His mercy, kindness, and longsuffering. More particularly, it is the work that the Lord wants to do and can do in each one of us, insofar as we make ourselves available to Him. We therefore live out of His grace. This is not grace for the forgiveness of sins, but it is grace so that we may now actually serve Him out of His grace. To such an extent even that we shall be rewarded for it in the future. So far does God’s grace extend, and out of it we live every moment of the day. Not only in connection with blessings that He gives us and which we can clearly recognise as blessings, but even where it concerns things that we do not immediately recognise as blessings (James 1:2).
Verse 6 therefore says what the purpose is of our predestination to sonship, namely that through it His grace should be praised, or rather glorified—for that is what “to the praise of the glory of his grace” means. What is said here is that God calls, gathers, and builds up the Church as a demonstration, a showing forth, of His grace. Not primarily directed towards us—we are the “object”—but as such, already now and into eternity. If later, after the Last Day, anyone ever asks why you are in heaven—for it was not all that good—then it must immediately be clear that it is not on the basis of merit, but that it has come from the riches of God’s grace. Even in a world from which sin has been banished, there will always remain a reminder, a kind of monument, of God’s grace.

Ephesians 1:7 (blessing 4)
7 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;

“Grace” is actually the most important theme of this Epistle to the Ephesians. The word occurs exactly twelve times in the letter, and twelve stands for kingship or dominion. This means, therefore, that the Epistle speaks of “the dominion of grace”. This is stated literally in Ephesians 3:2: “the dispensation of the grace of God”, or in other words, “the dominion of the grace of God”. That, in any case, is the Church. “He hath made us accepted in the beloved” is a statement that concerns our present position. God has made us accepted in Christ. The Lord Jesus Himself received grace after He bore our sins and, as a consequence, suffered and died. He then rose from the dead because He was made accepted on the basis of His faith. The first to receive that eternal life, and thus to be made accepted in this way, was the Lord Jesus. “Redemption through his blood” is far more than the forgiveness of sins. One is then bought free from the power of something. We have been redeemed from the power of sin and, as part of that, we have also received the forgiveness of sins, here rendered by the word “sins” (or “transgressions”, “offences”).
God frees us from the dominion of sins and also from our sinful nature. He removes both the symptoms of the problem and the cause itself. We have been born again, and where we have received New Life, where the power of God works in us, where the life of God works in us, the power of sin is no longer the greatest power in our life. It is still there and still works itself out. We shall undoubtedly still sin (1 John 1:8, 10: “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us… If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.”), after which those sins are forgiven (1 John 2:1: “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:”), for the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ cleanses us (1 John 1:7, 9). But the most important thing is to know that another power is at work in us, stronger than sin. Not a power whose purpose is to suppress sin, but one whose purpose is to bear fruit itself. Through the Life of Christ in us we are able to serve God. In this way sin and sins no longer reign in our practical life, but rather the life of Christ reigns in us. This is directly connected with the grace of God, for by grace we have received that power, and by grace that power works in us. Paul writes to the Corinthians:
2 Corinthians 12:9 (KJV – note: verse 8 in some numberings leads into 9)
And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.
God’s grace is sufficient for you. His grace neutralises sin and removes its consequences. Grace works in us, and we live from it—that is what redemption is, as it is formulated here in verse 7. We have been bought free; a high price has been paid for it (1 Corinthians 6:20; 7:23), and so we have been redeemed.
1 Peter 1:18–20
Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;
19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and

without spot:
20 Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,
Peter writes exactly the same as Paul in Ephesians 1:7. Here the emphasis is expressly on the blood of Christ, the blood of the Beloved from verse 6. So not on the blood of Jesus in the sense of the Lord Jesus who bore sins away on the tree, as Peter writes in 1 Peter 2:24. Here it concerns the position of the born-again person who is in Christ. The believer who in practice has been redeemed from the dominion of sin and of death, through the blood of Christ. The word “blood” is used figuratively by both Peter and Paul. Blood, certainly in the Bible, means life and not death, as many unfortunately think. Where we no longer have blood, we no longer live; where we lose blood, we lose our life. Blood means life, and therefore it says here that we have redemption through His Life. If He were not alive, His Life could not be the greatest power in us. We would then still be living under the dominion of sin.
1 Corinthians 15:17
And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. We should understand that Christ lives in us and that in the practical outworking of our life we have been redeemed from all those things to which we were naturally bound. We should then have “no more conscience” (awareness) of those things (dead works), so that we may serve Him in the practical outworking of our life.
Hebrews 9:14
14 How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?
Because He lives in practice, I also live in that power of God and have the victory. Romans 8:37
Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. To the extent that we make ourselves available to Him and His work, we also have a practical share in this victory over death, over sin, and over the law. “The riches of his grace” presupposes more aspects of this grace. We are not only saved by it, but we also live day by day from His grace.
John 1:16 says: “And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.” It concerns a manifold grace. In present-day English that is “grace upon grace”. That grace—God’s grace—should form part of every day of our life, of our walk therefore.

Ephesians 1:8
Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence;
Grace He has poured out upon us as a “flood”. We have become saturated with it, is the thought. We are surrounded by it. The wisdom of God is expressed in that abundance of His grace. That is the great Power which gives every mortal sinner the victory over sin and over death. Moreover, it suddenly makes every sinner fully equipped “to serve the living and true God” (1 Thessalonians 1:9). Where man was by nature unprofitable and had gone astray, and incapable of any good (Romans 3:12), it turns out

that when man is made accepted by grace, he is suddenly “thoroughly furnished unto all good works”
(2 Timothy 3:17) and is found to be holy and without blame (Colossians 1:22), by grace alone. “Prudence” in present-day English carries the meaning of hesitation. If the ice is still a bit thin, one treads very prudently. In any case it means having a forward-looking gaze. That one can look ahead. That one has a view forward and thus towards the future. If you ask me, that is exactly what it means in the Greek, and this is therefore the correct translation. God has, namely, with a forward-looking gaze given us grace. He knew where that grace could lead, and through that grace He makes us able to be ministers of Him and ministers of the New Covenant (2 Corinthians 3:6). Out of that same grace He even makes us His heirs and therefore joint-heirs with Christ. In the future, with that forward-looking gaze, He will give us that position at the side of the Lord Jesus Himself. That is what grace can accomplish.

Ephesians 1:9 (blessing 5)
9 Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:
The Old Testament speaks for a large part about the Law and about what the Law speaks of, namely the future, the days of the return of Christ. But we are not there yet. We live in a remarkable period about which the Old Testament explicitly says scarcely anything. The Lord would still make us acquainted with His work regarding this “interim period”. That is precisely why these New Testament books of the Bible (from Matthew to Revelation) were written. In the Old Testament we read about the coming of the Messiah who will establish His Kingdom. That Kingdom will indeed be manifested on earth. That there are 2000 years between the establishment and the manifestation is not stated literally. Figuratively, however, it is. It is expressed in typology. In the Old Testament images—but that is not called revelation; that is called concealment. In images, types, and parables truths are hidden. Nevertheless, they have been recorded and are recognisable to those who have meanwhile learned to understand those truths. You do not therefore read this at length in the Old Testament, but we can certainly find these things in it. It turns out not to be so terribly difficult after all. We have therefore received as a blessing that God “hath made known unto us the mystery of his will”. The most important part of His will He had already made known in Old Testament times, but there was a part that in the Old Testament remained absolutely unclear—covered—and hidden.
Deuteronomy 29:29
29 The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law. The New Testament books do not so much tell how the story continues, but they tell what is to happen first, before those Old Testament promises are in turn fulfilled. It is the Holy Spirit—that is stated many times in the New Testament—who makes this part known to us. The “Spirit of truth”, as named by John, would lead us into all truth.

John 16:13
13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. The Spirit of truth is there to make these hidden things known. We are given to understand what the Lord is doing, among other things to us, in us, for us. We then learn that He will one day also sit on the throne of His father David from His highest heavenly position. In passing we are told that we too shall share in that position of Christ and what role we shall fulfil in it in the future. It is even said on occasion that one of the reasons why He has not yet revealed His Kingdom is that He first wants to gather the Church from our dispensation, because He wants to use that Church in His work in the future. To that end we have been called, namely to be appointed as joint-heirs, as “sons”. To share with Christ as “elders” (occurring 12 times in Revelation) or in other words as “firstfruits”, in His glory and therefore in His dominion.
Romans 16:25–26
25 Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began,
26 But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith:
It was not necessary to make these things known to the Jewish people, who still do not believe. For them it therefore remains limited to the Old Testament. Nor is it of importance to make it known to unbelievers from the Gentiles. It was only of importance to make it known to born-again people, but then only to those who want to share in the glory of Christ in the future. Who do have an interest in God’s will for their own life now. This means that not every believer is occupied with it. If one does not now want to serve the Lord, if one has no interest in a future glorification with Christ, then God has no interest in making these mysteries known to us. Where we reach out towards God’s will regarding our life, He will not only make known to us His will regarding our life, but He also makes known to us His work in general in our present dispensation. And in particular His work regarding the Church now and in the future.

Ephesians 1:10
10 That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:
The word “dispensation” is also used in chapter 3:2: “the dispensation of the grace of God”, also called “the dispensation of the mystery” in Ephesians 3:9 (where unfortunately it has been translated away as “the fellowship of the mystery”). “Dispensation” is the translation of the Greek oikonomia (Strong’s G3622) and that means “economy”. Literally translated it means “household management”, the administration of a house (Greek: oikos). It is “stewardship”, and that can be taken away, as appears from the parable of the “unjust steward” in Luke 16. It begins

somewhere and ends somewhere. Oikonomia is the translation in the Septuagint of the Hebrew word memshala, which means “dominion” or “rule”. A household has a lord and household rules. The stewardship in Luke 16 was the stewardship of the Law, the household of the Law, the dominion of the Law. The “steward” (the Jewish people) would be dismissed, for the stewardship was to be taken away. The dominion of the Law gave way to another, namely that of grace. That is the dominion, the dispensation, in or under which we live. It began at the resurrection of Christ and will end shortly at the rapture of the Church. Although afterwards people will of course again receive grace, just as Abraham received grace while he did not live in our dispensation of grace. Characteristic of our dispensation is that out of the riches of God’s grace the Church is both formed and completed. It is all connected together. We shall return to this later. The Apostle explains how it is with this mystery, namely that it relates to “the dispensation of the fulness of times” and to the gathering together into one in Christ “of what is in heaven and what is on earth”. What would first be in heaven and likewise also on earth? The Kingdom of God. The “mystery” in verse 9 is the mystery of the Kingdom, just as the Lord Himself calls it in the Gospels. The word “again” (is not present (see, among others, the NIV). The word “all things” literally means “the universe”, “the all”. That it concerns heaven and earth is clear from the continuation of the verse, for it speaks of gathering together what is in heaven and what is on earth. This is the work that God does or that Christ does. It is a twofold work. First with regard to heaven and then with regard to earth. First it has to do with the mysteries of the Kingdom and then with how those mysteries are in turn revealed on earth to the world, to all people. The things spoken of here were to take place in this present time. The expression “that in the dispensation of the fulness of times” is a determination of time. The little word “that” (or “om”) is not there. The translators have inserted it. The little word “in” is the Greek “eis” (εἰς), translated in English as “into”. This word primarily means “towards somewhere”, but then also “into”. It therefore reads “unto the dispensation of the fulness of times”. That work with regard to the mystery of God’s will takes place unto—and also into—the dispensation of the fulness of times, and not thereafter. So it happens prior to the dispensation of the fulness of times, and it happens in the dispensation—unto, or up to and including, the household—of the fulness of times. For in that dispensation it is completed. It is no more complicated than that. The Kingdom on earth will only be established when the Lord Jesus definitively and visibly sits officially upon “the throne of his glory” in Jerusalem, as mentioned in Matthew 25:31: “When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory.” In very general terms, the thought is that this will be forty years after the rapture of the Church. Then begin “the thousand years” in which Satan will also be bound (Revelation 20:2). That is the dispensation of the revealed Kingdom. In the forty years preceding that, the household “of the fulness of times” reigns. In Ephesians 1 it is stated that this mystery in any case relates to our days, to this dispensation, but it continues unto, up to and including, the

dispensation of the fulness of times. The work of that mystery will end in that dispensation, with everything that is in heaven and everything that is on earth being subjected to Christ. Those forty years after the rapture of the Church are years in which, on the one hand, the Lord is still hidden and His Kingdom is still hidden, but on the other hand they are the years in which He is precisely revealing Himself and in which what is hidden is successively revealed. It begins with the revelation of Christ to the Church at the rapture of the Church. Seven years later comes His official revelation to the believing remnant of Israel on the Mount of Olives. Thirty-three years after that, the Lord will sit upon the throne of His father David in a meanwhile rebuilt Jerusalem. The point is that we should understand that not only in our dispensation, but also in a certain sense in the following dispensation, that Kingdom is still hidden. Those coming forty years do, when viewed from one side, indeed form part of the mystery of His Kingdom. When the Bible speaks of the mystery, it relates to the dispensation of the grace of God in which we now live, and also to the dispensation of the fulness of times which follows it. The present dispensation ends with everything that is in heaven being subjected to Christ. Only when Satan and his angels are cast out of heaven (Revelation 12) is the end of our dispensation reached, and it can be said that everything that is in heaven has been subjected to Christ. In the following dispensation everything that is on earth will be gathered together unto Christ. After the rapture of the Church and thus beginning with the seventieth week of Daniel, in the days of the great tribulation, everything that is on earth will be subjected to Him. Our dispensation has as its purpose to populate heaven with believers only and to fill the Kingdom of Christ in heaven. The following forty years are intended to leave on earth only believers in the Lord Jesus Christ who will enter His eternal Kingdom and ultimately dwell on a New Earth (Revelation 21:1).

Ephesians 1:11–12 (blessing 6)
11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:
12 That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.
Here it is not a question of our inheritance, but of an inheritance of Christ Himself. It is also very well translated: “in whom also we have become an inheritance”. And therefore not: in whom we have also received an inheritance. That is what newer translations say, but it is incorrect. It then becomes impossible to reconcile with the rest of what is said here. For in verses 11 and 12 it states that Christ Himself would receive an inheritance and “we” are that inheritance. Who are those “we”? It says afterwards. Namely, “those who were predestinated by appointment to sons” (verse 5). Before speaking of our own inheritance, it is first established that we as the Church are the Inheritance, the Reward, of Christ. That is already fixed beforehand in God’s plan. “The counsel of his own will” means that what He does is utterly in accordance with the righteousness of God. This is a legal matter and not a question of arbitrariness or election, as it is sometimes called. It is all legally perfectly in order. We, “His glory”, have

therefore also become an inheritance so that we should be to the praise, to the honour. For we are destined for the glorification of Christ. Where we have become children of God and have been added to that Church, it was never on the basis of our own merits, for then it would be to our praise. It is purely on the basis of the merits of Christ Himself, and therefore it is to His praise, or to the praise of Him. After His labour, we are “His Reward” (Isaiah 40, 49, and 62). The “also” indicates that the same truth that applies to Israel moreover—that is, something stronger—applies to the Church. If the traditional church teaching were true—that the church has taken the place of Israel—then the little word “also” could not be here. Heaven was never promised to Israel. From Israel the nations would be governed in the Kingdom. The Church, traditionally called “the church”, is assigned in Christ the heavenly position (Ephesians 1:3). This Church truth, in verses 11 and 12, is drawn from Old Testament statements that in principle were made about Israel.

Exodus 34:9

9 And he said, If now I have found grace in thy sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray thee, go among us; for it is a stiffnecked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for thine inheritance. “Take us for thine inheritance” is the most obvious translation of the Greek “kleromai” in Ephesians 1:11. It then becomes: “In whom also we have been taken” or “appointed as an inheritance”.

Deuteronomy 4:20

20 But the LORD hath taken you, and brought you forth out of the iron furnace, even out of Egypt, to be unto him a people of inheritance, as ye are this day. It says: “a people, namely an inheritance” and that is shortened to “a people of inheritance”, and thus simply an inheritance, for that is the line of thought. Then I mention also Deuteronomy 32:9, from the Song of Moses: “For the LORD’s portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.” The Psalms speak of Israel that was taken by the Lord as inheritance, as possession. In Ephesians these statements are, with great emphasis, applied to the believers from the Gentiles in our dispensation. They are applied to the Church. Israel was destined to be “the inheritance of the LORD” and that remains so. The Church has likewise become an inheritance. If I must say it briefly, then it is that the Church is the inheritance of Christ in a heavenly position and Israel in an earthly position. It means that the Church will in the future be appointed as “son” and that the Church will then share in the dominion of Christ from that heavenly position. Israel will in the future also be appointed as son and will share in the dominion of Christ over the nations of the earth from an earthly position. After the rapture of the Church, Israel will be the first people to come to faith, so that on earth, in the thousand years, Israel is the firstborn people. Among the nations on earth Israel is then the highest people in rank. It is an Israelitish world empire, with the King of Israel as King over all nations. That is then an Israelitish world empire over the whole earth. Regarding “we who first trusted in Christ” there is sometimes some misunderstanding because of the alternating use of the personal pronouns “we” and “ye”. People are inclined to apply “we who first trusted in Christ” to Paul and thereby to “we Jews”. Paul, however, seldom

considers himself a Jew and far more often a Gentile. Moreover, it is difficult to say that “we” refers to “the Jews”. They, for the most part and officially, did not “first trust in Christ”. Both the people and their leaders did not believe in the Lord Jesus as the Christ. They did not set their hope on Him, the Mediator of the New Covenant. They set their hope on Moses and thereby on the law, on the Old Covenant. I believe that the “we” refers to the first believers since the resurrection of Christ, and we belong to them. That does not alter the fact that those very first believers were indeed Jews. But then the Apostle also says “in whom ye also”.

Ephesians 1:13–14 (blessing 7)
13 In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,
14 Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory. In these verses the subject then turns to what we call “our inheritance”. The inheritance that we ourselves shall receive. Verse 13 certainly concerns the fact that we have received that Spirit once for all, and that it is the fulfilment of the Old Testament promises, but it is the lead-up to verse 14. The rest of the Epistle actually speaks about that. Verse 14 says that that Spirit, the Holy Spirit, is the earnest of our inheritance. For we received the Spirit in the past and thereby became children of God. That Spirit is also the earnest of our inheritance, but we receive that only when we shall be sons of God. The whole thought is that this Spirit, received when we became children of God, would bring us to, or lead us unto, our “appointment as sons” (Romans 8). This is the work that God wants to do in us. He wants to bring us to that appointment as sons, so that we together with Christ, indeed as sons and thus as kings and priests, might be manifested. But that is only at the return of Christ.

Ephesians 1:15–17
15 Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints,
16 Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;
17 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: After the Apostle has spoken about the blessings that we as believers in Christ, and even in heaven, have received, he begins from verse 15 rather demonstratively with prayer. He prays there primarily for the Ephesians, but in general for believers, and the content of his prayer is summarised in verse 17. After that he explains the line of thought. Ultimately it concerns the essential cause of all these blessings, namely the thought that our entire position, our salvation, our blessings, and whatever terms may be used for it, is fixed in the present position of Christ. In reality it is not about the fact that we have received the necessary things from the Lord and in Christ. What it is really and fundamentally about is that we have come to share in the position, and thereby in the inheritance, or

more generally in the blessings, that Christ Himself has received. Seven spiritual blessings in Christ
God hath chosen us in Christ
God hath predestinated us unto the adoption of children (sonship)
God hath made us accepted in Christ
God hath redeemed us from the power of sin and forgiven our sins
God hath made known unto us the mystery of his will
God hath made us an inheritance of Christ
God hath given us the promise of an inheritance
We are in any case identified, united, with Christ. This is further explained in the last verses of this chapter, when it is said that the Church must be regarded as the Body of Christ. With that, enough has really been said, for the thought is that, since we form one living organism, one Body therefore, with Christ, we have a share in Him. In Romans 6:5 Paul calls it "…we have been planted together in the likeness of his death…". The believer therefore has the moral duty not to live from our own old nature, but to live in submission to the Spirit who is in us. To make ourselves available for the work of the Spirit. Where the Spirit would first "guide you into all truth" (John 16:13) and make known to us "the things that are freely given to us of God" (1 Corinthians 2:12), we, after coming to faith, should immediately take that Bible to ourselves. Not just read it, but search it! That is what Scripture says about it. To make that Word our own, so that we might come to know Him and His work, so that we might grow in it. Or in other words: we should feed ourselves with this Word of God, and it is no more difficult than that. In our life as children of God we can fill our days with eternal things. We can build things that will never again be pulled down. Things that remain! What better could one think of?
We should be directed towards Him. He should be in our thoughts. His Word should fill our hearts. As we gradually come to know Him better, we also come to know ourselves. We come to know ourselves in the position in which God sees us. That is the basis of our practical walk of life. Thereby we are followers of Christ. Where He knew His future because it had been promised to Him, He walked in accordance with it, directed towards that future. Towards the joy that was set before Him (Hebrews 12:2). Scripture abundantly declares that such things are kept hidden not only from unbelievers and from the Jewish people, but also from everyone who is not willing to present his quickened body as a "living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God" (Romans 12:1). Only when we seriously place ourselves and thus our body at His disposal will He do His work in us. Remember also that the reason for not understanding present truth is that the Lord has no interest in revealing it to false teachers. The Spirit who dwells in believers has no interest whatever in leading the believer into all truth if he is not intending to live out of that truth. There are those who think it is about acquiring Bible knowledge. They have understood that from me, and not unjustly. But you will understand nothing of it if you do not begin by consciously giving your life to Him. The capacities to understand and make one's own biblical truths are not natural capacities of man. We have received them through or by the Holy Spirit. And He works in us only to the extent that we give Him room. To the extent that

we are willing. The casting aside of any biblical truth usually has the consequence that we shall subsequently understand no biblical truth at all. I mean that seriously. If one does not want to draw the consequences, that is, at a certain point says, “Yes, that may be so, Lord, but I do not believe that,” or “I cannot do anything with that,” or “I do not want that,” then the Lord withdraws. That is, after all, His normal attitude towards man. We are in a privileged position in that He wants to make Himself known to us, and at the moment we show that we do not value it, He withdraws. For it is not required. It is not obligatory. We do not live under the law after all. It is all grace.
Do we want to understand the truth, or do we not want to understand the truth? That is what it comes down to. The Lord did not tell Abraham which land He had appointed for him. “By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went” (Hebrews 11:8). He would never have known which land the Lord had appointed for him if he had not first set out on the journey. So that is where it begins. That is living by faith. Setting out on the way and then seeing where one arrives. That is not fatalism; that is faith. That is, namely, trusting in God, in His Word, and in His promises. The specific working of that Spirit in us is that we should receive “the spirit of wisdom and revelation”. “Revelation” means “unveiling” or “disclosure”; the covering is removed—it is literally an “unveiling”. It concerns “revelation in the knowledge of him”, for we should come to the knowledge of “Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom”
(1 Corinthians 1:30). Christ, “in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:3). God reveals His Wisdom in full—100 per cent—only in the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ. If you believe in God, you believe in what He has said, in what He did and does. Since God speaks exclusively about, and even through, the Lord Jesus Christ, and since He works only through the Lord Jesus Christ, it is therefore nonsense to say: I believe in God, but I do not believe in Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 1:18
18 The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,
“Enlightened eyes” means that those eyes are sensitive to light and thus able to see something. Not literal eyes, but the eyes of the understanding. That is how it has been translated here, but we could just as well translate it as “eyes of the heart”. That makes it rather clearer. According to biblical thinking, there is no difference between understanding and heart. One only grasps things when one believes them, and one believes with the heart, is the idea. The heart is “the inner man”, our being, our real life. It is largely synonymous with spirit. To open our heart means to believe. We receive the Word and we accept it. It is a matter of taking it in. It is not so much a question of understanding in the sense of intellect—for in that sense the word does not appear in the Bible—but of insight. That comes as one believes what the Lord has written. That does not alter the fact

that for study and searching, a certain degree of understanding (in our sense of the word) is necessary. But to accept things after they have been said or written requires no intelligence, only faith. From that, wisdom then arises—but even then only if we reflect on the things. Our responsibility is therefore to open our heart first and foremost to the Lord Jesus Himself and then to His Word. Then we receive “light unto our path” (Psalm 119:105: “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”). Through our “enlightened eyes” we should come to understand what the hope of the calling of Christ is—for that is how it stands. Through “hope”, therefore, it concerns the future of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Concerning what has been set before Him, and that is also set before us. That is why we should know “the hope of his calling”. “Calling” in the Bible always has to do with “appointment as son”, and thus as heir. We should moreover know “what the riches of the glory of his inheritance”. That is in any case His Kingdom. We shall have a share in that inheritance and thereby also in His glory. What a kingdom is to a king, glory is to a lord. “The glory of his inheritance in the saints” also points—even now, at least from the Greek—to the close union between believers (saints) and Christ.

Ephesians 1:19
19 And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,
Where we come to know that power (might) which works in Christ, we come to know the power which works “to us-ward who believe”. Where we come to know His glory, we come to know our own glory. Where we come to know His future, we come to know our own future. The same applies to the present position of Christ, for our present position is also derived from it, because we are united with Him. That union, as far as we are concerned, is maintained in practice by occupying ourselves with the things of the Lord, with His Word. It is not just a little power; it concerns the “exceeding greatness”. Two words are used to emphasise the greatness of that power. Of that it is said that it also works in us who believe. Not only in the future, but even already in the present—what is stated is entirely in the present tense. It is therefore promptly the theme of the rest of the Epistle, in which the work that God is now doing in the Church in general, and thereby in every believer in particular, is spoken of.

Ephesians 1:20
20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,
That power which works in us is the same power that raised the Lord Jesus from the dead. It is the same power that then exceedingly exalted Christ (Philippians 2:9) and that set the Man Jesus Christ in heaven at the right hand of God (Hebrews 1:13). Whereby and through which all things (the universe) were subjected to Him (verse 22) and through which was given to Him all power in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18). God raised Him from the dead. That is to say, He raised Him “from among the dead”, or “from among the rest of the dead”. One should therefore not confuse “the resurrection of the dead” with “the resurrection from the dead”. That term

indicates that other dead remain behind. The thought is that in Old Testament times nothing had ever been heard of “resurrection from the dead”. The disciples had heard of “resurrection from death” or “resurrection of the dead”, but never of “resurrection from the dead” when the Lord came down from the mount of transfiguration and said to His disciples: remember not to speak of it until the Son of man be risen from the dead. Then it says in Mark 9:10 that the disciples were “questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean”. The disciples wondered what was meant by resurrection from the dead, for they knew only that on the Last Day the dead would rise, all at once. When the Lord then speaks of “resurrection from the dead”, He is saying that He would rise long before the Last Day, leaving the rest of the dead behind. That is an important truth, because that same resurrection from the dead also applies to the believers in our dispensation. They will not rise on the Last Day, but rise at the time of the return of Christ. Since, however, they will return with Christ, they therefore rise before (seven years before) the return of Christ. The Lord Jesus rose from the dead, thereby making an exit of which He was the first to make use (1 Corinthians 15:20: “But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.”). He did not return into an old creation but into a New Creation. “And set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places”. It appears that in this time Christ is unfortunately completely reasoned away and used for all sorts of unbiblical theories. For example, the theory that we have three gods, although we claim to believe in one God. The doctrine of the Trinity, therefore. Some claim on the basis of this passage of Scripture that there are two thrones in heaven. On one sits God the Father and on the other the Lord Jesus Christ. That is a rather unfortunate misunderstanding, for there is only one Throne in heaven—if it were a literal throne. A throne is a throne because it is the official seat of the reigning authority, the king. One does not at all think thereby of a wooden chair with red plush upholstery and the like. By “throne” we think of the position of power, of kingship. The throne is there the official representation of it. In Revelation you really see only one Throne. What did John see on the Throne? The Lamb (Revelation 5:13; 7:10). When in Revelation 20:11 the judgement on the Last Day is spoken of before the great white throne of God, it concerns Christ, for long ago it was determined that He will judge. This statement in Ephesians 1:20 comes from Psalm 110 and, as far as I have been able to count, it is quoted twenty times in the New Testament. It is by a wide margin the most quoted verse from the Old Testament and therefore a very fundamental statement, because this is the basis for the present New Testament truth, namely: Christ seated on the Throne of God.

Psalm 110:1

1 The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. “Sitting” means “resting”. An end has come to the work, to the wanderings, to the course. It is therefore translated as “sit”, but it could just as well have been translated as “rest”, for that is the word used in Genesis 2:2–3 for the Creator’s resting from His work of creation. It means that He ceased from working because the work was

done. In Hebrews 4 it is said that the Lord Jesus has entered into His rest because the work is finished. The Lord Jesus posed a question about it: If the Messiah is the Son of David, why then does David speak of the Messiah as his Lord? (Mark 12:35). His contemporaries could give no answer to that, but of course it is because the Son of David is at the same time the Son of God. As Son of God He is David's Lord. The first word "LORD" is the name "Jehovah", and that means that this Name "LORD" or "Jehovah" is in any case the designation of the Lord Jesus as God. There are many Scripture passages from which it appears that this Name LORD is given to the Messiah, so that the Lord Jesus is indeed rightly called Lord Jesus (Jehovah Jesus). It is the apostle Peter who in Acts 2 quotes this statement and says that God has made this Jesus both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36), so that the earthly Man received a heavenly title. God has made Him Lord and Christ. The name LORD is given to the Christ, but some get into difficulties because of that. That comes from prejudices. The second word "Lord" is printed with a small letter in the KJV, which means that it is the translation of the Hebrew "Adonai". If for this occasion we take seriously for a moment that it concerns multiple thrones, then the question is: who sits on the right and who on the left? If you interpret this verse literally, then Adonai—Lord—sits at the right hand of Jehovah, the LORD. Then in verse 4:

Psalm 110:4

4 The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. This is said to Christ, as also appears from the New Testament (Hebrews 5 and 7). That "priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek" is the One who sits at the right hand, or on the right side, of Jehovah in verse 1. Then immediately follows verse 5:

Psalm 110:5

5 The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath. In the Old Testament, in 134 cases the Tetragrammaton (the Hebrew name of God transliterated in four letters as YHWH or JHVH) has been replaced by "Adonai" (Lord) or "Elohim".

Psalm 110:5 is one of the texts with "Adonai", but in the original text the tetragrammaton stands there: JHWH.

Ephesians 2:1

And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;

In Ephesians 1 Paul speaks of the exalted position of Christ since His resurrection and ascension. In chapter 2 he applies these things practically to us. The thought is very simple: that we as believers have been quickened together with Christ. Not that we shall be quickened—that is true as well—but that is not what is stated here; rather, we have been quickened with Christ and seated with Him in the heavenlies, already now. The question is not whether we understand this; the question is first and foremost whether we believe it. The question is not whether it is actually written here, for this passage of Scripture is far too clear for that. Of course much remains unsaid; there are things we may not yet understand, and there are things that can indeed be understood. It may take quite some time for it to sink in, but this thought in Ephesians is not new. In

Ephesians 1 we receive in general an exposition that could just as well have been drawn from the Epistle to the Romans. That we have been quickened with Christ is not new. It was already set out at length in the Epistle to the Romans, the very first epistle of the New Testament. Here the matter is taken further and it is said: we have not only been quickened with Christ, but also seated with Christ in the heavenlies. That aspect is left aside in the Epistle to the Romans. Here in the Epistle to the Ephesians we find the continuation of the Epistle to the Romans, just as—albeit in a different way—in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Here in chapter 2 the thread of the Epistle to the Romans is taken up again and developed further. For it remains a striking fact that Romans speaks of the way in which a person is saved, but then does not go any further. The epistle does not proceed beyond establishing that we who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ have, on the basis of that faith, been quickened with Christ. With some consequence and practical application, but the story goes no further. In Ephesians it is said that the preaching of the Gospel is the preaching of the living and exceedingly exalted Christ. That is really where this chapter begins. Here it is said to believers: “And you, who were dead in trespasses and sins, … hath he quickened…” But that last part comes only halfway through verse 5, for it is there that the main sentence really continues. The point is that He lives, so that we might receive life in Him and become partakers of that life of Christ and thereby of the life of the New Creation. So that we might become partakers of the Spirit of Christ. So that we might have a share in the blood of Christ—that is all the life of Christ. The distinction between believers and unbelievers is that unbelievers are dead and believers are alive—reckoned according to the divine standard. What, then, is being “dead”? For it may be told you that you are dead, while you thought you could carry on for a few more years. “Dead” means “separation”—more precisely, “definitive separation”. Separation that will not be restored. “Life”, the opposite, is “fellowship”, oneness. There are so many Scripture passages that use both words in the same breath. “Life” means “having a share in”, which is therefore the opposite of separation. Or, more solemnly: life is communication, and death is then definitively broken communication. Then one no longer hears the other, nor sees the other. From God’s point of view the natural man is dead, for God does not communicate with the man, nor the man with Him. I am speaking of the natural man. The theory well known among theologians that God is dead is of course not true, but it is nonetheless very close. It is simply approached from the wrong side. It is even impossible in itself. God can never be dead, but the conclusion is not so very far off. It was only wrongly formulated. The conclusion should not have been “God is dead”, but “man is dead”—that stands in black and white in the Bible. There is no contact, and that is the old problem that keeps rearing its head again and again. If there is a God, why this and why that? Why do we hear nothing from God? One of the answers—I know at least ten biblical ones—is that God is dead to us and we to Him. As far as God is concerned, we have been struck off the “register of the living”. Justice has run its course, and legally we do not exist before God. There is no contact from either side. The father of the prodigal son cried when his

son returned: “…this my son was dead, and is alive again” (Luke 15:24). Then people say: he thought his son was dead. No, the mistake lies in our thinking. We no longer know our own language. “Dead” means “no communication”. We pick up the telephone, hear nothing, and say: the line is dead. That means no communication is possible over this connection, and therefore it is no connection at all—in other words, there is no life, no fellowship, no communication. The continuation of the story is that God raised the Man the Lord Jesus from the dead; He reopened the communication. He spoke to Him and said: “Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee” (Psalm 2:7; Acts 13:33; Hebrews 1:5; 5:5). The Lord Jesus was raised from the dead by the power of God, by the Word of God, by the Voice of God. The speaking of God. The Word of God. For the Word is by definition communication. It brings fellowship, life, and light (John 1:1–4). Peter said: “Thou hast the words of eternal life” (John 6:68). That means: Thou hast the words—namely, eternal life. The Lord Jesus was called out of death and brought to life. When we, as men, as sinners who are dead before God, hear and accept that same Voice of God, that same Gospel, we too rise from the dead. That is stated in Ephesians 5:14: “Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead”. Said to the dead, therefore. Drawn from Isaiah 60:1–2. This truth was already laid down in the Old Testament. I shall return to it later.

Ephesians 2:1b
1 …who were dead in trespasses and sins;
Here it is not a theoretical matter but a practical one. How were the natural men dead “in trespasses and sins”? There are two possibilities. One is that we are indeed sinners and commit trespasses, because no communication with God is possible on that basis. The other is that because of those sins and trespasses the Lord Jesus died for all men (1 Corinthians 15:21). Then at any rate all men are dead, and there is no communication either. It makes no difference; we live after the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus anyway. “Sin” or “to sin” means “to miss the mark”—namely, that there is “no contact”. The communication does not come about. Sin is in reality the breaking of the fellowship that should exist between the Creator and the creation. And therefore we must be delivered from sin in order to come into fellowship with God. Man may perhaps seek God—though the Bible says “there is none that seeketh after God” (Romans 3:11). That is impossible because it is prevented by sin. Man may perhaps seek God, but he does not reach Him, for he is cut off from God. He has gone astray (Romans 3:12). Fellowship may perhaps come about, but not through man’s seeking after God. We have been reconciled to God through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. God has made us useful in Him, for we were all “become unprofitable” (Romans 3:12). But of course that is pointless if we are not useful in practice. Or if we are not used in practice. If in practice we are not “ministers of the new testament” (2 Corinthians 3:6). We should be such in practice as well. It is comparable to a carpenter. You have finally found a skilled carpenter, but then he takes on no work. He does not feel like it. That is unfortunately the situation of many believers. They have been

made capable of being ministers of the new covenant, but they give no thought to practising it. That is in fact the situation of the old man.

Ephesians 2:2–3
2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:
3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. The practical statement about that sin and those trespasses is: “wherein in time past ye walked”. And that according to “the course of this world”, in which “we all had our conversation in times past”. “Fulfilling” — being busy doing — “the desires of the flesh and of the mind”. That was the natural position of man. When our position as born-again ones is set in contrast here, the question is what we now do and wherein we now walk. Here it is said that the walk of the old man is not merely according to the will of his own flesh or his own thoughts, but in the highest instance according to “the aion of this cosmos”. According to “the prince of the power of the air”. According to “the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience” (= unbelief). That is three times the same thing, but expressed differently. The word Satan or devil does not appear in it. The thought connects with certain Greek philosophy, Gnosticism, in which it is assumed that the world is governed by “aeons”. Paul connects with that and says: the supreme aeon is the devil. He is the aeon of this cosmos. “The god of this world” could also have stood here, or “the god of this age” (2 Corinthians 4:4). This term for Satan means “the god, namely this age”. “This age” is someone who exercises power. An “aeon” is a god. “Aion” is a Greek word and among the Greeks it is the designation of “spiritual powers”. Verse 2 says: the whole natural humanity, this entire old creation, stands under the practical power of Satan. In practice Satan rules the world. Christ has received the supreme position, but in practice He does not yet rule the world. We live in what I always think of as “the dispensation of formation”. Christ is forming His Cabinet, His Church, His Ecclesia. His assembly of the people. His Council of Elders. He is making use of His power and His position to gather out of this world—which in practice is ruled by Satan—His own Government. You can imagine what an aversion the devil has to you and me.

We submit ourselves, as we ought, to Him and walk in accordance with His will. We walk in “the good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (verse 10). But that in no way alters the fact that the natural man is dominated by his own lusts, his own carnal thoughts, and above all by Satan himself. Perhaps it has never dawned on you that in practice Satan (the lord of the material world) exercises power over the flesh. Over the body. Over the desires of the natural man and certainly over his thoughts. If you are looking for the wicked influence of Satan, it is in the thinking of man. It is not for nothing that the apostle John says: “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of

God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). How is it that sometimes certain thoughts, certain philosophies and theories suddenly gain currency all over the world? How is it that everyone so unquestioningly accepts such an utterly idiotic theory as that of evolution? The theory of evolution became popular when Darwin developed a theory to prove how things must have happened. First they thought something up—namely, that things must have come into being by themselves. That must be true, and Darwin was the first to come up with a story to “prove” it—which of course is quite impossible. Why do people believe it? Very simply: because then they do not have to believe in a God. So who invented that? Who is the one who pushes God aside? Where does that inspiration come from? Not from Darwin and those other fellows. It comes straight from the devil. Where did Mohammed’s inspiration come from? If you want to reason away the true God, and yet man has a need for a god, then you set a few other gods alongside. Then people discuss the question: Who is the real God? Probably they are all the same, is the idea. Then the true God is the same as all those gods that Satan himself invented? That is roughly how it goes. It is not limited to religion, science, or philosophy. The same applies to politics. Communism and socialism were invented to bring Christianity under subjection. The socialist revolution was there to fight the Christians. If you are only aware that the whole natural man, the whole of humanity, stands under the power of Satan. That is how man is kept occupied. The only alternative is that we consciously seek the Truth. Then suddenly… the Truth seeks us. God seeks us. But where one is in a certain sense unbelieving—“disobedient” in verse 2—one will also in a certain sense be controlled by Satan. Then one will be blinded by him. Many born-again people are nonetheless blinded. They close their eyes to the Light. What percentage of believers live under the dominion of grace? How many live under the dominion of the law, the Old Covenant, darkness, shadow? That is because one does not want to believe in the dominion of grace. In the forgiveness that comes from God. In God’s mercy and thereby also God’s help. In that way one automatically ends up back in darkness. The light of the New Covenant is held back. This “ministration of death” is of course not the intention, but that is what happens. It is the responsibility of the believer himself. He should believe everything that Scripture says, and then he stands in the light in order thereafter also to walk in the light. The “among” at the beginning of verse 3 is “in”, just as at the beginning of verse 2. As is well known, this expresses “close union”. In this case, therefore, with Satan himself. In that we “also… all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh”. Or in other words: carnal lusts. At least as long as the emphasis lies on “carnal”, for that is the meaning of this expression. There are also spiritual desires. Those are the things we desire to do in accordance with the will of God. And then: “fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind”. That can again be read as: “carnal thoughts”, so that it concerns the lusts and thoughts of the flesh. You can now ask the question: is the natural man controlled by “the course of this world” or by his carnal lusts and thoughts? Some say: it comes from the heart of man. It is the flesh of man, because one prefers not to be confronted with the fact that the flesh

stands under fairly direct influence of Satan himself. But nonetheless that is what it is. It is both, and they are dependent on one another. Satan makes use of our flesh; he works in our flesh. That is clear enough. Man does not exist in himself. Man does not even find his origin in himself. Nor does his thinking. That comes from somewhere else. From that spiritual world, namely—that is the biblical thought. All things that are seen come forth from things that are not seen. Behaviour, courses of events, developments always come from somewhere else. The only real purpose of the study of nature is to come through those visible things to the knowledge of creation and of spiritual things. How can you come to know God? From Scripture and from creation. It says: “we were by nature”—on the basis of our birth—“the children of wrath”. Children of disobedience and thereby children of wrath. We lived under wrath and were destined for wrath. “Even as others”. Both Jew and Gentile lived in the same circumstances, despite the law for the Jews. It is the natural position of the natural man. So verses 1 to 3 of Ephesians 2 concern the position of the natural man, who is ruled by Satan and that through his flesh, but God has no fellowship with it. The bond with God is broken, and as far as the world is concerned the light is extinguished. And then it says:

Ephesians 2:4–6
4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,
5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)
6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus;
Problems arise when we think of a place that is very far away from here. That is very high up. That is not so, for the heaven spoken of here is “the third heaven”
(2 Corinthians 12:2) or “the heaven of heavens” (Deuteronomy 10:14). That heaven extends down to the earth. That heaven is not far away. On the contrary, it is around us and even within us. And vice versa. We have been placed in that heaven. That is to say, according to the Bible we are reckoned as belonging to this invisible world. The natural man walks on the earth and makes a “hole” in the heaven. The heaven surrounds him, but he does not form part of it. The believer does form part of those heavenly—invisible—things. It is also said in the Bible: “the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us” (2 Timothy 1:14). Christ dwells in us. Is He in heaven, at the right hand of God? Or is He in our midst this evening? Or is He even in our hearts? Yes, all three! For it concerns this invisible world, of which we—in Christ—have come to share. We form part of “the heavenly things”. Or we are heavenly things. For that is what Ephesians is about in the original text when the word “heaven” is used. As born-again children of God we are already “heavenly beings”. With Christ we have been seated in heaven, there where God dwells. We were under the power of Satan, but… God has so arranged it that we now “live according to the age of that coming world”, according to “the age to come”, or simply under the dominion of Christ. Who is exceedingly exalted and seated at the right hand of God. We walked in the lusts of the flesh and we did the

thoughts of the flesh, but… God has so arranged it that we can now live according to His Spirit. Verse 2 says that the natural man lives under the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience, but now we should live under the working of the Holy Spirit. It is a practical matter. Through the “great love wherewith he loved us” we have received life, so that we might praise Him. That is fundamental spiritual truth. “God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love” are two synonyms for “grace”, but that comes a few verses later. To the expression “even when we were dead in sins” follows a comment: He loved us.

John 3:16
16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

The God who nonetheless hates the sinner has nonetheless made us alive by giving us His Word. For His Word is life, and where we accept that Word we accept life and come to life. God has therefore loved us and made us alive with Christ. Really you should simply leave out “us”. God has made alive those who received His Word. Life was offered to everyone, but only those who accept it come to life. When God speaks to us, He breathes upon us. In John 20 the Lord does that to His disciples: “And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost”. That is how we come to life. When we receive someone’s words, we receive someone’s life. The more we listen to someone, the more we take over someone’s life, his thinking, his being, his nature, and so on. That is simply how it is. We listen to the Word of God so that we might be changed into the image of God. So that we might think as He thinks. The logical conclusion, towards which the apostle is heading here, is that we who formerly walked “according to the course of this world”, Satan, should now walk “in accordance with the age to come”, Christ, for we have come to share in the life of Christ. We have not received eternal life for our own sake, but it is first and foremost the life of Christ in us. That then means that our lives should be totally differently ordered from the lives of the natural man. For to that end He has “raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (verse 6). That is the line of thought the Apostle follows here, with many parenthetical sentences and remarks. Paul has been heading from verse 2 towards verse 10, where the high point of the passage is named. But first:

Ephesians 2:7–9
7 That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.
8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:
9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.

We have been saved by grace through faith! That “route” is God’s gift. That is therefore “not of yourselves”, but from Him. Not of our works, so that we have nothing to boast about. It is not our merit.

In Romans 4:5 Paul already said: “But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. To believe means: not to produce something oneself, but to

receive passively. After one has received it, one does indeed become active. Not in order to receive eternal life, but because one has received eternal life. God wants to show His grace to “the principalities and powers in heavenly places” (Ephesians 3:10). The Lord now shows, and in the future will show, “the exceeding riches of his grace”. This means that God wants to use the Church from our present dispensation. The purpose is that He—not we—should show, demonstrate, through visible teaching, through us to others, “the exceeding riches of his grace” and that “in the ages to come”.
In 1 Peter 1:12, where it says “…which things the angels desire to look into”, the apostle Peter speaks of exactly the same things. That statement means nothing if it were not the intention that they should now gain insight. Angels, those heavenly beings, should see in what way God’s grace functions in our present dispensation of grace. How God makes earthly sinners into heavenly ones, into righteous ones, and even into heirs of the whole creation. The angels should know that.
We already live in the age to come (or ages, for it is eternal). The ages to come began at the resurrection of Christ, and since our new birth we have been transferred out of the present evil age into the age to come. We have long been living out of His grace, but the point is that we should be a visible example to others who are in heaven. They see us, but we do not see them. From heaven one sees everything that is on earth. We should therefore be patterns of God’s grace, for we have been given a heavenly ministry. A ministry concerning heaven and not directed towards the earth. That can only be when we also in the practical outworking of our lives live out of that grace, out of the mercy of God. That comes to us “through his kindness toward us in Christ Jesus”. We should proclaim those “virtues of Christ” to those who are in heaven.
1 Peter 2:9
9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light;
According to Ephesians 3 that “showing forth” is to “principalities and powers in heavenly places”. Peter does not add that, because his epistle will find application in the next dispensation. When Israel is restored in the future, born again, it too will proclaim the virtues of God. Not to those in heaven, but to those on earth. God will show forth, and we do play a role in that, but a rather passive one. The active work is done by God Himself, and the passive function is reserved for the Church. That becomes clear in verse 10, where these things are stated rather more concretely.

Ephesians 2:10
10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. The main thought of verses 9 and 10—the climax of this passage of Scripture and the opposite of verses 1 and 2—is that we have been saved, not of works, lest we should boast. Instead we are “his workmanship”. The works spoken of are therefore not the result of our own labour. What “good works” are these? For example: showing forth the exceeding riches of His

grace (verse 7). Making known to principalities and powers the manifold wisdom of God (Ephesians 3:10). Proclaiming the virtues of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvellous light (1 Peter 2:9). It does not say “created in Christ Jesus unto good works”, followed by “that we should do them”, for then we would suddenly have a very active role again. Instead it says: “that we should walk in them”. I think it could hardly be stated more passively. The word “do”, which seems so obvious, is not used. We should do good works, but if you use that word, then we Christians suddenly have a works-religion again. We have precisely no religion of works, but of faith. That is why the Apostle is very careful with his expression. Doing good works is indeed mentioned in the Bible, also by the apostle Paul. But we should not emphasise those terms too much. The point is simply that God Himself has prepared those good works, and where we make ourselves available in His service, He will lead us in that walk spoken of here. It is therefore not about the works we think up. He has a plan and from that has determined works. He gives the direction and considers that certain things must be done. We should do them “without murmurings and disputings” (Philippians 2:14). That is the purpose of our salvation and of our already being seated in the heavenlies. In good works God is glorified before “the heavenly things”. It is not that one will be saved by good works. It is that one is saved unto good works. One should not do good works in order thereby to be saved. One should be saved in order thereafter, on the basis of that salvation, to do these good works. In the quoted Philippians 2 Paul says in verse 13:

Philippians 2:13

13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

He brings about in us the will to do certain things. So that our will is His and His will is ours. Then He gives us the possibility, the power, the ability actually to carry out that work. The apostle Paul himself is, incidentally, a very good example of that in his life and ministry.

2 Corinthians 12:9

9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Paul acknowledges that the Lord does the work, and that connects again with verse 9 of Ephesians 2: “Not of works, lest any man should boast.”

Concerning those “good works” it can be said that they are works that form part of the work of God in general and in particular in our days of the building up, the gathering, and the edification of the Church. That is primarily to the honour of God. The rest of this chapter is about that, but actually the whole rest of the Epistle. We shall touch on that now briefly, for first I should like to show you what the term “good works” means in the Bible. The first time the term appears in the New Testament is in Matthew 5, the well-known part of the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 5:13–16

13 Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

14 Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

15 Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.
16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. If anywhere on earth one should find or seek the Word of God, then it should be with us, with believers, and therefore we are “the salt of the earth” or we are “the light of the world”. From the expression “see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” one can conclude that good works lead to the glorifying of the Father who is in heaven. They should see those good works in us and on that basis glorify the Father who is in heaven. In this passage of Scripture no attention at all is given to what those good works might consist of. That is because here it is actually speaking about the Church, while that Church did not yet even exist. While that Church was still a mystery. In a veiled way the Church is spoken of here, and therefore one should not draw further conclusions from the verse, unless one does so in the light of other Scripture passages. For that I go straight to the last time in the Bible that the term “good works” is used, and that is in 1 Peter 2.
1 Peter 2:12
12 Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation. This verse largely corresponds to Matthew 5:16. What is not stated there is stated in 1 Peter 2:12. The question is namely: when then will they glorify God? Unbelievers will not even recognise good works as such. 1 Peter 2:12 gives the answer: “in the day of visitation”. Both “day” and “visitation” carry the meaning of “judgement” at any rate. When then will they—unbelievers—glorify God? When they are judged. They will “bow the knee” to the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 14:11; Philippians 2:10), and the meaning of that expression is that they will submit to Him, for He is the One who will judge them and who will therefore “visit” them. Who will judge them in “the day of the Lord”, or in “the day of God” (the Last Day). Unbelievers do indeed see our good works, but they do not even recognise them as good works. They will even speak evil of us, says Peter. But a time is coming when those same people will have to acknowledge that those things of which they spoke evil were indeed good works to the honour of God. The good works that are seen by unbelievers does not really mean that they thereby come to faith. That cannot be either, for faith would not be in good works but in the Word of God. Unbelievers are not capable of judging what good works are. Good works are the fruit of our knowing the good works of Christ. They are therefore the fruit of our fellowship with Christ and not the other way round. Not: we do good works out of our old nature and the fruit is then that we come to know the Lord or that we are born again. One should therefore be “throughly furnished unto all good works” through instruction in God’s Word (2 Timothy 3:17). In that way we are made capable by Him to be ministers of the new covenant and “to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light” (Colossians 1:12).

Ephesians 2:11
11 Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands;
Why “remember”? Because of the things discussed in the preceding verses, and especially in the immediately preceding verse. Namely that we who were by nature Gentiles, and therefore did not belong to Israel, have through faith and through our identification with Christ come to share in those blessings that were originally promised to Israel. That is the simple thought brought forward here. Why then does the Apostle spend so long on it? Because there is still quite a lot attached to it, and he sets that out here. The thought is that Israel was created unto good works, so that the people should walk in those good works. That can also be concluded from this passage of Scripture. Here we are confronted with the original calling of Israel. That is a very important part not only of this Epistle but of the whole New Testament truth. For what purpose, with what end in view, did God choose Israel? That is simple enough.
Exodus 4:22 says: “…Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn.” At the exodus from Egypt and the giving of the law it is said to Israel: “…ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people … And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation” (Exodus 19:5–6). A people of kings and priests. The calling of Israel was not to receive eternal life, although that belongs to it. This believing people was chosen by God, not to be saved or to become believers, for that does not exist anywhere in the Bible. The believing people was chosen to be priests and kings. In Exodus 19:6 it says “a kingdom of priests”. It is repeated in the books of Moses and also later in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. The election of a saved people in the function of “son”, priest, and king means in practice that Israel was called so that God through that people would make His Word known to the other nations, who are then promptly designated as “nations” or “Gentiles”. Israel was given precedence, set before the other nations, to be priest. To serve God, for that is the function of the priest. To glorify the name of God, to make known and maintain the Word of God in the midst of the Gentiles. And immediately connected with that is that the people was called to be king over the Gentiles. That means that where God will establish His Kingdom over all nations—which has still not happened—He will do so through His heir, His son, and by that I mean Israel. For Israel would be God’s Son. That, incidentally, is the way the Jewish people reason away all those statements about the Lord Jesus in the Bible. When there is talk of a son of God, they apply it to Israel, to themselves. There is good biblical ground for that, but it is not the highest truth. The highest truth is that the King of Israel would be that Son and that Israel would share in that kingship over the nations and therefore be a royal people. Provided, of course, that they would accept their own King, the Lord Jesus Christ. When the Lord establishes the definitive world empire over all nations, it will be the Kingdom of God. The “kingdom of heaven”, for it comes from heaven. But it will equally be an Israelitish world empire, because it will be administered and governed by Israel. He will first establish His Kingdom in

His own people, and from that own people, Israel, that Kingdom will be extended over all other nations. An Israelitish world empire, therefore, in which the Israelites function as the administrators and thereby the kings over that Kingdom. They will share in the dominion of their own King and Messiah. Israel is therefore described as reigning, ruling with God. That is a translation of the name Israel: “ruling with God”. Because they rejected their own High Priest, the King, Christ, nothing has so far come of that priesthood and kingship. Israel—as a people—has been dismissed from the priestly and royal function.

Hosea 4:6

6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children. Since the priestly office primarily involves passing on and maintaining the Word of God, and thus the knowledge of God, it is self-evident that if this priestly people rejects the knowledge and the Word of God, it is in no way capable of fulfilling that priestly office. When at the first coming of Christ they again rejected Jesus Christ, and thereby the Word of God, that automatically meant that this prophecy from Hosea 4 was literally fulfilled. Israel—what remained of it, the Jewish people—was dismissed from this priestly function. It was no longer the people through whom God would make His Word known to the nations. Ephesians 2:11 states that we, who were Gentiles, have come to share in the commonwealth of Israel. We have been added to Israel and placed in the position in which Israel originally stood, and in the future will stand again —namely in the function of a kingdom of priests or royal priesthood. That implies that, since Israel will in the future reign with Christ over the nations of the earth, we as the Church—although we were Gentiles by origin—will in the future reign with Christ over the nations of the earth. Israel has been dismissed from the priestly function, and the Church, as a collective, has been appointed in the function of a priestly people, with the responsibility to make the Word of God known to the other nations. That cannot be otherwise, for we, the Church, are the only ones who have submitted to that Word of God. That is the present position of the Church, and that is set out here in Ephesians 2. Then follows what the practical consequence is for our life now, and then what the ultimate consequences are for the future. Our individual responsibility as believers is in any case subordinate to the responsibility that believers collectively in the Church have. Acts 2:47: “And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.” Those believers should live in accordance with the calling of that Church of which they have come to share. If the Church has been placed in the priestly function, then it means that we, individual believers, are priests by definition. We find that in the apostolic epistles and in particular in the first epistle of Peter. First the exposition that we have been born again and become children of God, but then about a royal priesthood.

1 Peter 2:9

9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a

peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light;
This corresponds with the general thrust of the Epistle to the Hebrews. The emphasis here is on “priesthood”, for that is already the present position of the Church. As regards kingship, we shall be appointed to that at the return of Christ.

Ephesians 2:12
12 That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. We who were Gentiles were “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel”. We were not Jews. Who then are they? They must be Israelites by birth who lost that commonwealth. Then we are speaking of the ten tribes of Israel. Scripture says “Gentiles”, but from the explanation and from the connection with the Old Testament it is clear that it concerns certain Gentiles in particular—namely the ten tribes of Israel. Where Judah set no value on the birthright, it came to Ephraim. Those ten tribes are Gentiles and not Jews, for they do not live under the law. They have again come to share in “the commonwealth of Israel”. They had lost it and received it back through faith. Here in Ephesians 2 the application is made of Old Testament prophecies concerning Judah and Ephraim. It therefore concerns Gentiles who once shared in the commonwealth of Israel, but lost it and afterwards received it back again. That is the greatest mystery in the Bible. The Lord kept back a part of His people. When Judah, which had not been kept back, refused to accept the New Covenant, the Lord still had another people. That part of Israel gave rise to the Church of today, with its heavenly inheritance and with the birthright. What follows therefore says that Gentiles have come to share in “the commonwealth of Israel”.

Ephesians 2:13
13 But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. “But” indicates the contrast with what has gone before, with the situation as it formerly was. “In Christ Jesus” is a term we know from chapter 1, where the list was given of blessings that have become ours in Christ. Since we have come to share in the Lord Jesus Christ, since we have been “planted together” with Him (Romans 6:5), since His blessings have become ours, since that time we have come to share in “the commonwealth of Israel”. That “being far off” is the relatively general expression in the Old Testament by which Gentiles are designated. Those who are “nigh” are in the land of Israel. In many cases where the term is used (for example Jeremiah 31:10), however, it is clear from the context that not just any Gentiles are meant, but specifically those Gentiles who have literally been alienated from the commonwealth of Israel—the ten tribes of Israel. I cannot see why it should not be exactly the same here. Those who are “far off”, those who are “at the ends of the earth” (among others Isaiah 41:9), would be brought “nigh”. “Being nigh” means that one has come quite close and still has a little way to go to arrive fully.. Those are really two words. The expression in the KJV means

that one is there. For example, in “the day of the LORD is near” (Isaiah 13:6) that day has arrived. So those who are far off are not there, but those who are nigh are there. That of course also appears from the further course of the passage. Ephesians is a prison epistle of the apostle Paul. Just as in Philippians and Colossians, specifically Church truth is made known. In it is said that precisely the believers from the Gentiles have come to share in the commonwealth of Israel. I say that because there are those who precisely deny that. They say that the calling of the Church in our days should not be regarded as a fulfilment of Old Testament and Israelitish promises. But here in the Epistle to the Ephesians it is said that we have come to share in the commonwealth of Israel. We have been added to Israel and have come to share in the duties, rights, and blessings of Israel. The line of thought is therefore: The promises were made to Israel and therefore the Gentiles were without hope. We were without God in the world, for God was the God of Israel. But now, in Christ Jesus, we have come to share in all those things mentioned in verse 12. They are blessings of Israel, but we have come to share in them. “By the blood of Christ”. Blood is life. If you have no blood, you have no life. If blood is administered to you, you receive life—from another, of course. Jehovah’s Witnesses are not allowed that. We Christians are. I can say that calmly, for I have received blood from someone else and therefore I live. This blood, namely, of Christ. The life of Christ. Or as Peter says: we have come to share in the “sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:2). That is imagery drawn from Old Testament ordinances by which things were cleansed and sanctified. Those things are a picture of the New Covenant. We are reckoned as having been sprinkled with the blood of Christ, because we have received His life. He is our life. His blood cleanses us, and that is stated in the present tense.
1 John 1:7: “the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin”. It concerns the present position of Christ. That is why it also says “Son”, for that He became at His resurrection.
Hebrews 9:14–15a
14 How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?
15 And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament…The New Covenant began at His resurrection. In that position the “blood of Christ” cleanses the heart, the conscience, from dead works, so that we might serve the living God.

Ephesians 2:14
14 For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;
“Christ… who is our life” (Colossians 3:4) is our peace. That too is stated in the present tense. It speaks of the present position of Christ and therefore also of our present position. The word “peace” primarily expresses that unity has been brought about, both in Hebrew and in Greek. It means that things are joined together. The word peace really has the same meaning as the name Joseph in Hebrew, with the additional

sense of joining together. Just like the name Levi. The priestly function is one of joining together, making parties one, bringing together. In that way we have been reconciled to God through our High Priest. In that way we have come to share in the divine life, in fellowship with Him. That is called “peace” here. “Who hath made both one” says that the High Priest has reconciled both the believing Jew and the believing Gentile to God. They are therefore automatically also reconciled to one another. Both have a share in the life of Christ. Where we personally have been born again and have received the life of Christ, we have become not only planted together with Him, but also with one another. At first there was something between Jew and Gentile, something that made separation. That is here figuratively designated as “the middle wall of partition”. Here reference is made to Old Testament typology concerning the wall that made separation between “the court of the Jews” and “the court of the Gentiles”. There was also a gate in it. When the apostle Paul was arrested on the temple mount, he was accused of having taken a Gentile (Trophimus) through that gate, from the court of the Gentiles into the court of the Jews (Acts 21). That was considered unholy. The apostle Paul in that way introduced the Gentiles within Israel. He showed that the Gentile, if he came to faith in the Messiah of Israel, would come to share in the commonwealth of Israel. Here in verse 14 the Apostle tells us that that wall between Jew and Gentile has been removed by God Himself. What that wall represents is stated afterwards.

Ephesians 2:15
15 Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace;
While He was busy “breaking down the middle wall of partition”, “having abolished in his flesh the enmity”. Those are two parallel sentences. You can interchange the parts and thus read: He has abolished the middle wall of partition and He has broken the enmity in His flesh. It is the same thought twice. That “middle wall of partition” he regards as a picture of the Law, for the Law makes separation between Jews and Gentiles. The most important aspect of the Law is that it is instruction from God. Of the Law it is said extensively in the New Testament that it is “a bringing in of a better hope” (Hebrews 7:19). The Old Covenant as such is a picture of the New, which was to come. It is nothing less than that, but also nothing more than that. It only points to what was to come, and that has come. Even in that sense the Law has fulfilled its function. The enmity did not so much consist in the instruction, but in “the law of commandments contained in ordinances”; the law under which one lived in practice. “Flesh” does not stand for the sinful flesh or possibly the body of the Lord Jesus that was crucified. I believe that “flesh” is used here in the sense of a “body”. “Flesh” is not always necessarily sin. Where “flesh” is the designation of the visible world, it is indeed the sinful world, but there are certainly occasions where “flesh” designates a “certain formed body”. When Paul speaks of “in my flesh” (Romans 7:18) he means “in my body”. Moreover, flesh is not always the designation of material things. “Flesh”

does not necessarily have to be a material body. It can just as well be a spiritual body. That is the case here, I believe. It is the designation of the Church, the Body of Christ (Genesis 2:24 and Ephesians 5:31–32). Adam and Eve were originally one flesh, one body. Those two were always one. They did not become it; they already were it. That is therefore such a beautiful picture of the Church, for it was always one with Christ. The Church comes forth from Christ. It comes forth from His Body; it is “a rib out of His side”. While “a deep sleep” fell upon Adam—a picture of Christ in our dispensation—this woman was secretly made and set opposite him. And thereby beside him. As “an help meet” (Genesis 2:18). So that that woman should serve the man. The thought is that this happens in our dispensation. Ephesians 2:15 says that we, believers from the Gentiles, together with the believers from the Jews, have come to share in the Body of Christ. That is not unusual; it is stated in nearly all the Epistles. We are all members of His Body, His Flesh. In 1 Corinthians 12:13 the Apostle says it thus:

1 Corinthians 12:13

13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. That the body parts are one comes because the Spirit is in them. The life of Christ, His blood is in it. So that: “he might make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace” (Ephesians 2:15). That “new man” is therefore simply Christ, including the Church. Though you may read “new humanity” for “man” (Romans 5). The old humanity, with Adam at its head, gives way to the new humanity, with Christ at its head. The difference lies in the nature of the life. In Adam perishable life; in Christ imperishable life. Jew and Gentile have in Christ, in His flesh, been created one new man, as already stood in verse 10: “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus”.

Ephesians 2:16

16 And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:

Clearer it cannot be: “in his flesh. In himself, in one body”. “By the cross”, however, puts some on the wrong track. With hindsight they apply “the cross”, and the thoughts they associate with it, to verse 13 and then again to verses 14 and 15. With “blood of Christ” they think of “blood of Jesus”. With “flesh” they then think of His “crucified body”. With “one body” in verse 16 they still think of the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus, of His suffering and death. But that is not so. It precisely concerns the Church as the Body of Christ, in which that peace has been brought about. Then at the end of verse 16 it is nonetheless said how that Law was ended. For that had not yet been said, although the result had already been named. It is nonetheless said where that law has gone. That wall, that enmity, has been “slain by the cross”. In other words: the law was crucified. By the death of the Lord Jesus the Old Covenant was ended, as it is set out extensively in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Hebrews 9:16

16 For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of

the testator. The New Covenant was promised, but “the testator” had first to die, and then the New Covenant would truly come into force. Under the Old Covenant one lived as long as the Man, the LORD (Jehovah), lives. But after that Man died, one is free from that “law of her husband” (Romans 7:2). It is no more difficult than that. The death of the Lord Jesus means a legal end to everything old. Even to the whole old creation. Thereby also to sin and thereby also to the Law. When one is one with Christ, one is in any case delivered from any law whatever. That applies to every one of us.

Ephesians 2:17
17 And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. To preach peace is the proclamation of the New Covenant. “Gospel” is the “good news of the New Covenant”. “Came” means “resurrection”. He came into the world. As Firstborn He was brought into the world. That does not concern His incarnation, His birth from Mary, but His new birth.
Hebrews 10:5
5 Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me:
The Lord Jesus Christ, the High Priest of the New Covenant, comes into the world. When? When it was said to Him: “Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee” (among others Hebrews 5:5). At His resurrection, therefore, for “it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood” (Hebrews 7:14). He was of Judah, not of Levi. He was therefore no priest under the Old Covenant. Here it concerns the High Priest of the New Covenant. “Sacrifice and offering” are a picture of the Body of the One who here speaks and says: not those old things, but My Body hast Thou desired. That Body of Christ would be offered to God. By that and with that and of that He would be served. The Epistle to the Hebrews teaches that “every high priest… must… have somewhat also to offer” (Hebrews 5:1). This High Priest of the New Covenant must also have something to offer. He offered Himself. He therefore offered His Body, the Church. The thought is that we have been offered with Christ to God. That together with the High Priest of the New Covenant we have set our lives in the service of God. “You which were afar off, and to them that were nigh”, says Ephesians 2:17, brings us to Acts 2. Peter there preaches among other things the following:
Acts 2:39
39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.
Peter preaches openly for the first time the Gospel of the risen Christ at the right hand of God. That Gospel is for you who are here and for those who are afar off. Paul does exactly the same in Ephesians. There is only one difference. Peter says “unto you… and to all that are afar off”. And Paul says here in Ephesians 2: “you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh”. The order is now reversed. We are later in the history of salvation; the emphasis here comes to lie on Gentiles.

Ephesians 2:18
18 For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.
“Through him” is evidently the same as “by one Spirit”. From which it follows that He is the Spirit. Christ is the Spirit, or the High Priest after the order of Melchizedek. 2 Corinthians 3:17 says: “Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty”. When “Spirit”, and especially “Holy Spirit”, is spoken of, that is the designation of Christ now, of the Christ, the Invisible One, who does not show Himself. Who hides Himself, but who nonetheless does His work, in particular for us and in us. That is summed up here. Insofar as we have access to the Father, it is through Him.

Ephesians 2:19
19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;
All believers are joined together and are “fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God”. No longer strangers and no longer far off, but nigh. We have come to share in the priestly ministry of God’s people. Scripture does not say in the Old Testament concerning the New Covenant that it is exclusively, that is to say only, intended for Israel. It is said that it is intended for all believers, and that the New Covenant would come into force at the appearing of the Messiah, at the resurrection therefore of the Lord Jesus. Both Israel and the Church ultimately live under the New Covenant. We already live under the High Priest and King after the order of Melchizedek of the New Covenant, as was announced in the Old Testament. That same High Priest and King will also be that for the people Israel in the future, after the new birth, after the conversion of Israel. Although Israel will be first among the nations, the Church comes first. That is then taken from the earth and receives a position in heaven, so that Israel, although second, will on earth become the first people among the nations. If you say that the Church has taken the place of Israel, then I must say that the thought is completely biblical, as long as you know what it means. As far as earthly circumstances are concerned, that is in any case a temporary matter.

Ephesians 2:20–22
20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;
21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:
22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.
At verse 19 you may perhaps still think for a moment of dwelling in the same house, forming part of the same household. But in verses 20–22 it concerns the building as such. The stones of which the building is constructed are a picture of the members of the household. Of the members, the individuals of the family, who dwell in the house. The building of such a structure is highly symbolic. That is why much attention is paid in the Bible to the way in which that temple was built in those

days. The stones from the quarries were already shaped. Afterwards they were no longer joined or mortared together, but they were fitted together. For they fitted, and that is a beautiful picture of the gathering of the Church in our days. The “household of God” in verse 19 are built “upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets”. Then there is mention of the chief corner stone, Christ Jesus—though verse 20 says “Jesus Christ”. There is some misunderstanding about this verse, but when it says “Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone”, “being” does not refer to the foundation, but to “building”. It cannot be otherwise. Otherwise it would not correspond with the imagery from Psalm 118:22: “The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner”. The apostle Peter quotes that in 1 Peter 2:7. Both the words “head” and “corner” together indicate what position that Stone occupies in the building. A “corner” is namely a side, but when “head” is added, it can only be one side: the top side. When it says “Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone”, I must first say that the word “stone” is not there. It simply says “chief corner”, and it is therefore a reference to Psalm 118. It therefore does not concern a stone at the corner of the foundation, thus in the low horizontal plane, but it concerns the last stone of the whole building. The foundation is the first stone and this “chief corner” is the last stone and therefore a type of Christ. The foundation also, incidentally, and therefore Christ is the First and the Last, the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the Ending, and therefore also the Foundation and the chief Corner. Christ is not the corner stone of the foundation, but Christ is the whole foundation on which is built. The Stone from Isaiah 28 and Psalm 118 and also
1 Corinthians 3 is Christ. The laying of the foundation has everything to do with death and resurrection. The foundation lies in the ground and then rises above it, so that something may be built upon it. It speaks of the death and resurrection of Christ. The chief Stone, the Top of the Building, speaks of the exaltation of Christ, especially in the future. In any case the “household of God” are built upon Christ as foundation, “fitly framed together” in order then to grow “unto an holy temple in the Lord”. Verse 22 continues on that and says “in whom ye also”, and thereby the Apostle connects with verse 11 and thus with the beginning of this section, “ye also”, together with the believers from the Jews, “are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit”. Or: “for a spiritual habitation of God”. Or: “for a spiritual temple”. The temple in our days is a spiritual temple. The first temple is the tabernacle, which could be taken along. That has disappeared. The second temple is the temple of Solomon. The Jews call that the first temple. The temple of Solomon was destroyed at the time of the Babylonian captivity. That temple became number three at the return from that captivity. In the system of numbers three and four always belong together. They form one whole. That third temple of Israel was namely replaced stone by stone and then, much later, extended by the temple of Herod, which was only a few years finished in the days of the Lord Jesus and the disciples. That was temple number four. Temple number three therefore never disappeared, but was replaced by temple number four, the temple of Herod. The Jews call that temple the second

temple, but we keep to number four. The next temple would then have to be the fifth. Since a fifth is always invisible, there must therefore somewhere be an invisible temple. If the Jews were rather better acquainted with their own biblical numerology and system, they could also draw that conclusion. That fifth temple is, in our fifth dispensation, an invisible temple.

Ephesians 3:1
For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,
For what cause? For the cause of the building of that Temple and therefore the building of that priestly people. That one Body from verse 16 of chapter 2. That one people. For that reason “I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles”. It does not even say: the prisoner of the emperor, though that he was. Paul is imprisoned because he himself willed it and evidently because God willed it. “Prison” or “imprisonment” is, in Jewish understanding, exactly the same as “exile” or “captivity”. We think of exile as being shut out, and of imprisonment as being shut in. That is a misunderstanding, for though you may be shut in, in reality you are shut out. Prisoners have, from of old, been shut out from society, removed from society. In Hebrew there is only one word for both imprisonment and exile. Paul, in his imprisonment, as one shut out, expresses how the one responsible for the Gospel and for the Word of God is an exile at the time when the Jews have been dismissed from their original task. One step further: how the priestly people, which is then responsible for the preaching of the Gospel, is a people in exile. From a Jewish point of view that is not the Jewish people, but Ephraim. In those days the Jewish people were not in exile. On the contrary, all Gentiles stand outside Jewish society. They are “those who are far off”, who are in exile and shut out. In the future the original position will be restored to the Jewish people. That will be after “two full years in prison”. That is the picture of the 2000 years from the resurrection of Christ until His return. The two years of Paul in prison are a picture of the 2000 years, of our present dispensation. In that period salvation, the Kingdom of Israel, is taken from the Jewish people. It is exactly the same as the 2000 cubits between the Ark of the Covenant, which went into the Jordan, and the people who then entered the Jordan (Joshua 3). It was on the same date, 10 Nisan, as the appearing of the Lord on the Mount of Olives. So first the Ark of the Covenant went through the Jordan. It was carried by the priest. He went down to the bottom of the Jordan, and then Israel still had 2000 cubits to go before it would reach the same position. Paul is in the position of “the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles”, the example of what the Church is. The whole Church is namely a prison, but more about that in chapter 4 of Ephesians.

Ephesians 3:2–5
2 If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:
3 How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words,
4 Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the

mystery of Christ)
5 Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;
We now live under the dominion of grace. We must have heard of that, for it is a very long period that will end at His return. In our dispensation grace alone reigns. The whole world has lived out of the grace of God for almost 2000 years. That will not remain so. As far as we are concerned, yes, but as far as the world is concerned, no. On the basis of the grace of God the judgement upon the unbelieving world, upon humanity, and even upon the devil has been postponed. Everyone can curse God as much as they like, and nothing happens. The expression “God punishes immediately” is in our dispensation in any case not true. Not at all. God does not even punish at this moment, but postpones it, as Romans 2:5 says: “But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God”. To the unbelievers the Apostle says that the wrath of God comes only in the future. The punishment will come too, but not now, for now the whole world lives out of the grace of God. The consequence is that the world notices nothing of God and therefore acts as if there is no God. For God does not make Himself heard…
“Dominion” in this case is “the ruling principle”, and that means that all things are judged on the basis of grace. You are therefore very quickly finished with that. God namely does nothing and lets things be as they are, but that is the grace of God. In the Epistle to the Romans it is said that “grace reigns upon the throne”.
Romans 5:21 says: “That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord”. Since the dominion of the Law has ended, grace reigns. Since the dispensation of the Law has ended, we live in the dispensation of grace. In Hebrews 4:16 it is said that we know a “throne of grace”. Only those who draw near to this Throne, who submit to the One who sits upon it and want to live under grace and not under law, receive from Him “mercy, and find grace to help in time of need”. The thought is that in our present time, from the first coming of Christ until His return, and more specifically until the rapture of the Church, things are realised that formed part of God’s Plan (verse 11) but that were not made known in former ages. They are now “revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit”. For example, that the salvation of the Jewish people was taken away and given to Gentiles. The Apostle speaks in verse 3 of this mystery and mentions it again in verse 4. He had already mentioned it in chapter 1:9 and mentions it again in verse 9 of this chapter. A mystery does not concern something that was not there, but something that was there but was covered. That is the meaning, and also of the English word.
The apostle Peter speaks of things that are hidden. Of things that the Old Testament prophets did not understand.
1 Peter 1:10–12
10 Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you:
11 Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was

in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.
12 Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.
The Old Testament prophets searched their own prophesying. They especially sought statements about the time that would lie between what we call the first and second coming of Christ. Peter says it in one very long sentence, but nonetheless very clearly, that the prophets searched their own prophecies, in particular concerning grace. And what did Paul say? “If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God”. The Old Testament speaks of the glory of the promised Messiah, but also of “the sufferings of Christ”. The question is then: how does He go from suffering to glory? For where His suffering is the result of the unbelief of the people among whom He appeared, of the rejection of the Messiah by the Jewish people, how will that Messiah nonetheless establish His Kingdom in Israel? There is therefore a blank space in between. The thought is that Church truth must be found in the Old Testament. There it is hidden and therefore not made known. In Ephesians 3:5 Paul says that. But that is not the end of the story. It is rather not made known as it is now revealed. The opposite of revealing is covering, or simply hiding. The word “reveal” literally means “to take away the covering”, “to unveil”, “to uncover”. To remove the wrapping. We now have access to those things that were formerly hidden. Since the resurrection of the Lord Jesus the Bible has been supplemented with the New Testament books. In them the hidden things of the Old Testament are unveiled. All that the New Testament teaches is directly drawn from often rather mysterious and concealed Scripture passages in the Old Testament. In the past it was made known, set down in black and white. In our days it has been revealed, the covering has been removed from it. The thought of 2 Corinthians 3 is that really everything in the Bible is covered to the one who does not believe. It is a well-known passage of Scripture, but we simply apply it only to the Jewish people. It is indeed said about them.
2 Corinthians 3:13
13 And not as Moses, which put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished:
That is highly typological, for the idea is that over the law, and in particular over the glory of the Old Testament, there lies a covering that comes from unbelief. Israel, or the Jewish people, is officially still unbelieving to this day. And therefore the following verses say:
2 Corinthians 3:14–15
14 But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which vail is done away in Christ.
15 But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart. They are unbelieving, and from unbelief they do indeed read the Old Testament, the Tanakh therefore. They read the Old Testament writings, but the covering remains and therefore they do not see the glory,

they do not see the rich promises that stand in it. They do not know them, and they certainly do not see Church truth, present truth in the Old Testament, because they do not believe in the Lord Jesus as the Messiah. They reject the Christ, and therefore a covering remains over the Scripture. Christ would take away the covering ("which vail is done away in Christ"), but for that they would first have to come to Christ. Or: as long as one does not believe in the Lord Jesus as the Messiah, the covering remains over the Bible. Only when one submits to the Lord Jesus, the Messiah Himself, is the covering taken away. Only then will one find New Testament, Church truth in the Old Testament. In Genesis 1:3 the LORD said: "Let there be light." That is Church truth. You may think it concerns the days of creation there, but then the most important thing escapes us —namely that when God speaks, He says: "Let there be light." When subsequently the Word of God comes, light comes. Then Christ comes, the "light of the world" (John 8:12; 9:5).
Paul says that too:
2 Corinthians 4:6
6 For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. That is simply Genesis 1, is it not? That is present truth. And there are many more examples. We have already seen that of Adam and Eve in Genesis 2 and then Ephesians 5 (see page 28). What do you think of the exchange of Ishmael and Isaac? That is the exchange of the Jewish people and the Church. The same applies to the exchange of Esau and Jacob, Reuben and Joseph, Leah and Rachel. The Jewish people set aside, for first comes the Church and then still the Jewish people. And then the history of Genesis 38, the birth of the twins Perez and Zerah from Judah. It looked as if Zerah would be born first, but it was Perez first and then still Zerah. First the Kingdom would come through the Jewish people, but it was interrupted by the birth of Perez, a picture of the Church, and afterwards comes still the conversion of the Jewish people. That is a beautiful picture of our present time. This is symbolism and also a visible way in which Church truth was hidden in the Old Testament. It has meanwhile been made known, revealed. Now that we have these New Testament revelations, we recognise them without difficulty in the Old Testament, as part of God's appointed Plan.
2 Corinthians 3:16
16 Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away. The "vail upon their heart" (verse 15) can only be taken away by Christ. If one does not come to Christ, the covering remains over the Bible. Only when that heart turns to the Lord is "the vail taken away" for the Jewish people. These are examples from the Old Testament, but that does not alter the fact that the same truth applies equally to Gentiles. When one does not first come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and submit to Him, then a covering remains over the Bible, and one will never understand anything of the Word of God. And that is my answer to questions such as: how can you possibly know all these things? Where do you get that from? How do you learn it? Well, you simply learn it from the Bible—but on the condition that you submit to the Lord. One should come to the Lord Jesus

Christ in faith, and then the eyes are opened. I asked that of a man born blind, of Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46–52). Completely dependent on His grace, the blind man said: “Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me.” And then his eyes were opened. What a beautiful picture!
When people say they cannot find Church truth in the Old Testament, there are two reasons. One may be: they do not believe beforehand that it is there to be found, because they misinterpret the statement in Ephesians. That is often the case. The other reason is: they do not believe in the Word of God. They do not submit to the Lord. As long as they do not do so, the Lord does not consider it worth the trouble to draw back the covering.
John 5:38–39
38 And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not.
39 Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. If one does not first come to the Lord, then searching the Scriptures is of no use at all. That is evident from the great nonsense that is usually told about the Bible in all sorts of circles. Both in Christian and in atheistic circles. People do study the Word, but they still do not come to the Lord. Then the Word remains closed. He still decides whether He will “open the seals of the book” or not, freely after Revelation 4 and 5. Then His Book simply remains closed, and no revelation of what is hidden is possible. However hard we try to make biblical truths known to people, God does not want them to be known. Yes, He wants them to be known to believers, but not to unbelievers; they must first come to faith. The parenthetical sentence in verses 3 and 4 of Ephesians 3 reads: “as I wrote afore in few words; Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ”. Paul had other things to make known to them first, but so that no one should think that while he made those other things known he did not know these things, he had already written it down “in few words”, and now he refers back to that. He says in effect: remember that I wrote that Epistle to the Romans? That was about quite different things, but I knew this then as well, for look at the close of the epistle, the very last verses of the very last chapter. If you complain that I did not write or say earlier what I did know, then that is because you were not ready for it. To the Corinthians he says: that is because you are still carnal, and I cannot even tell you now (1 Corinthians 3:2).
For it does not interest you; it goes in one ear and out the other; you are not open to it. We, on the other hand, should surrender ourselves to the Lord, entrust ourselves to Him in confidence, in faith, that He would direct and give content to our lives. Where we do that, we open ourselves to the Word He has given us and to those things we may not find interesting, but which He considers important enough to make known to us. In time we shall find them astonishingly interesting and shall love them. That will then determine our lives. For our present today is determined by the expectation we have for the future. The Apostle refers, with regard to those “few words”, to his earlier epistles, and if I begin at the beginning, I come to the Epistle to the Romans. The whole of Romans 16 is already the

close of the epistle, repeatedly. In fact the epistle was already closed at the end of chapter 15:33: “Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.” But then there come all sorts of greetings and commendations. Right at the end there stands a very complicated sentence, because in the many parenthetical clauses the apostle mentions this mystery. That is from verse 25 onwards.

Romans 16:25–27

25 Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began,

26 But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith:

27 To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen. The section begins with “to him” and after “now” there is a comma. The main clause only continues in the second half of verse 27, so that you get: “To him be glory for ever.” To whom be glory? Well, “to God only wise”, says verse 27. That happens through Jesus Christ, for you cannot give glory to God apart from Jesus Christ. And therefore it says: “To him, namely to God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ.” It is peculiar that Paul here does not pronounce God’s blessing upon the believers, but he does the opposite. The believers should pronounce their blessing upon God—namely, “to him be glory”. We should echo that. The question is not whether we are served by Him, but whether we serve Him. The question is not what He gives us, but whether we have already given ourselves to Him. In those long and difficult parenthetical clauses, from which no one really emerges, he nonetheless gives a hint of the mystery—namely the heavenly position of the Church. That heavenly calling and inheritance of believers today does not appear in the Epistle to the Romans. The difference between Israel on earth and the Church in heaven is not dealt with in Romans. Some then say: so he did not know it then, because he does not write about it. But do you really have to write everything you know? The mystery, the heavenly position of the Church, was not the subject then. We should first learn that a person is justified by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, that he no longer lives under the law, that he no longer lives under the dominion of sin. So the Apostle closes the Epistle to the Romans after sixteen chapters and then says that God would receive glory, also from us. But, he says, it is that God who is also “of power to stablish you according to my gospel”. That is a striking expression, because the epistle begins with “the gospel of God, concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 1:1–4 and verse 16, “the gospel of Christ”). “My gospel” is not a change of expression, but a change of subject. For it concerns the revelation of the mystery here mentioned: “the dispensation of the grace of God”, of which he says: “which is given me to you-ward”, because I was to make it known. He then speaks of heavenly things and therefore of the mystery. Of “the dispensation of the mystery” in fact. In the last sentences of the Epistle to the Romans the apostle Paul therefore says: Note, there is much more to come that you did not yet know and do not know. It is God’s intention that

He should establish the believers to whom he writes in this “gospel of God, concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord”. And also in “the gospel of Paul”, or “my glad tidings”. That is not only the preaching of Jesus Christ, but: “the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery”. “According to” and therefore “in accordance with”, “in connection with the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began”. Paul had not yet said earlier that all those Old Testament statements about the glory of Christ are just as much statements about the whole Church. What he did not say is that we as believers “are blessed… with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3). In Ephesians he does say that, but not in Romans. Romans does not go further than: We are one with Christ in the likeness of His death and the likeness of His resurrection. Ephesians says: We have been raised up together with Him, but we have also been seated together with Him in the heavenlies. Did Paul not know that earlier? Yes he did, but the story did not go that far in the Epistle to the Romans. That had to come later. The point is therefore that the statements about the appearing of Christ in glory are just as much statements about the appearing of the Church in glory with Christ as His Body. You do not find that so explicitly, but with a “detour” in the Epistle to the Romans, and a pointer in the last verses that this would still come up, for example in the Epistle to the Ephesians or the Epistle to the Colossians. That gospel “was kept secret since the world began”. And then it says in verse 26: “But now is made manifest”. That is to say the covering is off. It is no longer kept secret, but spoken of. By whom? By “the scriptures of the prophets”. That means that these things have been inspired in Scripture. “Scriptures of the prophets” means that it has been written from God’s side, and those are the books of the New Testament. In the first New Testament epistle the Apostle immediately mentions it. He does not explain it. He simply says: remember, there is more to come. For the Corinthians it simply remains covered, for that is what it amounts to in practice. Only at the end of the epistle does he say: I shall make another attempt. That is in chapter 15 of 1 Corinthians. Then he tells a mystery
(1 Corinthians 15:51 ff.) Paul sets store by our also noting that he has already mentioned the mystery on earlier occasions; this dispensation of the grace of God. That is important, because it is often thought that the Apostle only learned these things while he was in prison in Rome, at any rate only later in his career. In 2 Peter 3:16 the apostle Peter says that the apostle Paul in all his epistles has spoken of these things.
2 Peter 3:16
16 As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. Because they are “unstable”, that is, do not hold fast to biblical truth, these things are “hard to be understood”. When we do stand firm, this theme is not so very difficult at all. In verse 5 of Ephesians 3 the Apostle does not say that this mystery was not made known to the sons of men in former ages. He does explicitly say that it was not made known earlier as it is now revealed in our days. What formerly stood in Scripture

but was not understood is indeed understood in the light of the New Testament. One should therefore read the Old Testament in the light of the New Testament. Without the light of the New Testament much in the Old Testament is completely incomprehensible. Especially those parts that in one way or another speak of our present dispensation of the mystery, or the dispensation of grace. It has meanwhile been revealed, by God Himself, or Christ Himself. The Lord Himself has taken away the covering and revealed it to His “holy apostles and prophets”. Those are not two different kinds of people; they are apostles. Where the Lord has directly made Himself known to them and directly spoken to them, these apostles are at the same time prophets, and therefore it is called “apostles, namely prophets”. They are both at once, and that is also one of the reasons why we no longer have apostles in our days—at least not in the specific biblical application of the word. We no longer have prophets, and therefore no apostles either. “Holy” means that in a special way these apostles were set apart. They were set apart by God Himself for these things. And God has revealed these things to them through His Spirit. God Himself has taken away the covering for these apostles and prophets. He has let them see how these Old Testament matters apply to the days in which we now live. That had already been announced.
John 16:13
13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. This Spirit has indeed guided them into all truth. It is presupposed that they knew only a part of the truth. One part applied to Christ, but the rest to the Church. It has been revealed that the Gentiles are fellowheirs.

Ephesians 3:6
6 That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:
Christ would be set as Son (Heir) of God. Israel will share in the kingship and priesthood of Christ and will as king and priest have a share in the glory and dominion of the Messiah, in the “thousand years” to come. Here it is established that the calling of the Messiah is also the calling of Israel, and also of believing Gentiles. In our days that has been given to all believers. The priestly responsibility was formerly given only to Israel. So it will be in the future, in the days of the return of Christ. God’s blessings always come through Israel, regardless of what “Israel” is, for to that end Israel is a royal and priestly people. Church blessings also come from Israel, for our Lord, who is our Head, is the Firstborn out of Israel. The word “body” can very well be interpreted as “people”. Of the same body, belonging to the same people. Or to the same temple. The Gentiles are fellowheirs of the Body of Christ, and we have a share in that People. They are “partakers of his promise”. That double in “partakers” is really a pleonasm. We have come to share in God’s promise in Christ. Israel on earth will in His return also have a share in “His promise”. That is the truth for Israel in the future and that is the truth for the Church in our days.

Ephesians 3:7
7 Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Paul says that the situation described is so “by the gospel whereof I was made a minister”. The little word “a” does not exist in Greek. In English it does. In English you are a carpenter; in English “a carpenter”. That “a” has to go in between. In English you leave it out, for it means nothing. It then reads: “Whereof I minister became”. It leaves open that others also minister that same gospel. We too, hopefully, minister that same gospel. Paul understands in this connection his own responsibility. He points to that repeatedly, not only here but especially also in the Corinthian epistles. The expression “given unto me” we already read in verse 2. That thought is repeated. God has namely appointed Paul in this position to preach this gospel with regard to our present time. Paul would do that “according to the gift of the grace of God”. Gifts that come from God are also called “spiritual gifts” (1 Corinthians 12:1; 14:12). That does not presuppose that one has received certain abilities to be able to do something, but means that one has received the responsibility to do something. The gift Paul received was his responsibility to minister this gospel. His gift consisted in this apostleship, and that is what he says here: To me this grace has been given, not to be able to preach that gospel, but to preach it. In the parable of the talents it is clear what those gifts involve.
Matthew 25:15
15 And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. They already had their ability. They were capable of something, possessed capacities, and in accordance with that they received talents. The talents they received were therefore not their capacities. Talents are the responsibilities that flow from those capacities. If someone has the capacity to preach the gospel, then God may give him the responsibility to do so. That latter is his gift; the former is not. The grace we receive as children of God is there to serve the Lord. Is that then grace? Yes, for by nature, as sinners, we would not qualify for it. The grace consists in the fact that we have been given the possibility, in our life here still in the flesh, to acquire a treasure for the future (1 Timothy 6:19). Then we are immediately free from the mystical story that in some strange or mysterious way the Lord gives us certain abilities. That is not so. I am not saying that it never happens that way; I am only saying that this is not the meaning of what the Bible understands by spiritual gifts or gifts of grace. If the Lord does give certain abilities to meet our responsibilities, then that falls into the category of “finding grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16). Paul did not bear that responsibility out of his own strength, or on the basis of his own striving. It was God’s power that placed him in this position. He also says what he understands by it.

Ephesians 3:8
8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;

Paul says that he is conscious of his subordinate position. He describes himself as the least, the very least, the lowest of all the saints. On another occasion he says why he thinks so (Galatians 1:13)—because he was the one who once persecuted the Church and was in a position of ignorance through his unbelief. But it was out of the grace of God that he was seized on the way to Damascus (Acts 9). The purpose was not that he should be saved, but that he should serve God. He refers to that now. He says therefore: not what I myself chose, but God called me to it, and that naturally gives him considerable authority. Note that it does not say “to preach the gospel among the Gentiles”. That is the superficial reading. It concerns the preaching of “the unsearchable riches of Christ”. That is the content of this gospel of which he has become a minister. He is therefore not merely speaking of “the gospel of Christ” or “the gospel of God, concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord”, but of the continuation of that and the application of these things in our days. The statements about Christ are far richer than one might suspect from a superficial reading of the Old Testament. The “unsearchable riches of Christ” does not mean that we cannot know them. We can know them. Not because we search them out ourselves—that indeed cannot be done—but because God has revealed them through His Spirit. The term comes this time from 1 Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 2:9–10

9 But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

10 But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. The “unsearchable riches of Christ” corresponds to “what no eye has seen and no ear has heard”. We would not have known those things if God had not made them known. Church truth lies hidden in the Old Testament, but I am also convinced that without the New Testament we would not find those deeper things either. Without the Word of God we would not be able to know them at all. Then we could at most come to a knowledge of God, the Creator of heaven and earth.

Ephesians 3:9

9 And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:

“Fellowship of the mystery” rests on a misunderstanding. What has been translated as “fellowship” is the Greek “koinonia”, but as far as I can ascertain that word is not there. In the Codex Sinaiticus it reads “oikonomia”, and if I must choose, I choose “oikonomia”, the word from verse 2, namely “dispensation”. I really do not know what “fellowship of the mystery” would be. I do know “the dispensation of the mystery”, a hidden dispensation, and that is what it is about. That is what Paul said in verse 2: “if ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God”. That consists of mystery, according to the following verse. In verse 9 he says it more briefly. He takes up the thread from verses 2 and 3 and points to

“the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God”. That is to say, it was there, but in God.
John 1:1
1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. If it therefore says here that it has been hidden from all ages, hidden in God, then we note that these things were known beforehand with God, and that, if it was hidden in God, it was also hidden in His Word. The Bible is the self-revelation of God. The Word is Christ, for Christ is the self-revelation of God. Christ is God Himself. If these things were therefore hidden in God, then they were hidden in the Word. We find it in the Old Testament, but then covered—for example in biblical typology. All typology fundamentally applies specifically to Christ, but everything that speaks of Christ also speaks of the Church, and you find it there. Those things that were hidden from us are easily, in the light of the New Testament, found again in the Old Testament. “In God, who created all things by Jesus Christ”. What is this remark doing here suddenly? That is surely a strange statement, at which one must stumble. Surely it is not the Apostle’s intention in his argument to tell us that God created all things? Why does he say this then? Well, simply enough, because in that creative work of God Himself all the things here mentioned are expressed. God gives expression to His Being in all things, for even creation is the self-revelation of the Godhead. Some have difficulty with this sentence, for if Jesus Christ was only born 4000 years after Adam, how could He then have created all things? The answer is that the One we now know as Jesus Christ was not yet Jesus then, nor yet Christ. The One through whom God then created all things is the One we now, after 4000 years and now after 6000 years, know as Jesus Christ. That was Jehovah, but what is said here —that stands extensively in the Old Testament as well—is that Jehovah, the LORD God, is none other than the One we now know as the Lord Jesus Christ. If it was He through whom this creative work of God came about, it also means that the characteristics, the attributes, of Jesus Christ have already been expressed in His creation. What is therefore first said of God is then said of Jesus Christ. God is Word, and then we say Jesus Christ—the Lord—is the Word of God.

Ephesians 3:10
10 To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,
Not “manifold” but “multicoloured wisdom of God”, for that is the basic meaning of what stands here. “Manifold” means “multiple”, but even more “multiple in colours”. “Multicoloured wisdom of God” stands even stronger. It concerns “being variegated”, multicoloured, and then with the word “much” before it. Much variegated. So double. It therefore concerns explicitly “multicoloured wisdom of God”. Variegated is the reference to a properly cut gemstone, as an ornament. This namely points to the facets of the wisdom of God. A facet has something to do with colour. It is a face of a gemstone. Gemstones are cut in many flat facets. A brilliant, transparent and clear, through which you can simply look, is the form in which a gemstone is cut. Through those many facets the incoming light

breaks in many ways. A brilliant has 58 facets in a regular form. That produces the most ideal refraction of light. 58 in the Bible and in numerology stands for a New Creation. 8 stands for a New Creation, and 50 does too. And that is again so because both 50 and 8 go beyond 7. After the 7 of this world, you come into the 8. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus was on the eighth day, the first day of the new week. In music the eighth note is the first of the new series. 50 likewise lies beyond 7, for when 7 has fulfilled itself, you have 49. The year calendar of Israel is reckoned in groups of 49 years, or 490 years. After 49 years comes the jubilee, the fiftieth year, a new beginning. If the number 58 becomes even larger, it becomes 358, and that is the number for the Messiah. 3 stands for the promise; 5 or 50 stands for fulfilment of the promise in a spiritual sense; and 8 stands for fulfilment of the promise in a literal sense. If you write down those numbers, you can still see the connection between the 3, the 5, and the 8. A 3 is an 8, but then not quite a closed 3. He is not yet “full”. The 3 promises an 8. When that promise is fulfilled, an 8 arises. The 5 is a bit more difficult. If you twist the top part of the 3 a little, you have a 5. It brings fulfilment of promise, but only in a spiritual sense. Not yet complete, and then not in the earthly sense. The multicoloured wisdom of God therefore has many facets, many aspects, or many colours, many sides. If those many facets were not there, it would simply be white. It all lies enclosed in the one white light, mentioned in verse 9: “to make all men see”. Another aspect briefly, without explanation: the seven colours of the rainbow run neatly parallel with the content of the seven different dispensations. The Apostle comes in this verse to the ultimate position and calling of the Church. The short sentence is: “To the intent that now by the church might be made known the wisdom of God”. In that the Church therefore has a priestly position, for making known the wisdom of God is by definition the priestly responsibility. Also in these words we find that when the Bible speaks of Christ as such, it concerns just as much the Church that is to share in Christ and in that way will make known “the manifold wisdom of God”. In that connection, and with a view to “principalities and powers in heavenly places”, it is important to understand the Church position, because the position of Satan and his staff becomes vacant when he and his angels are cast out of heaven (Revelation 12). That “vacancy”, that open place, should be filled, and for that He gathers the Church to Himself in our dispensation. The “principalities and powers” here named are in any case the same as in Ephesians 1:21, of which it is said that Christ has been placed above them, and we also, for we have been raised up together with Christ and seated in the heavenlies. Far above every principality and power therefore. They are the same principalities and powers as in Ephesians 6:12, but we shall come to that. The point is that we are stronger than they are, for the simple reason that, according to 1 John 4, the One who is in us is stronger than the one who is in the world. That is a statement about the Holy Spirit, Christ, in us, over against the antichrist in the world. Still hidden now, but openly in the future.

Ephesians 3:11
11 According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:
“According to the eternal purpose” means that the calling of the Church in our dispensation has been fixed in that Plan from the beginning, and from before the creation of this world. From a human point of view one says: God had a plan with Israel, but unfortunately Israel did not want to come to faith. Whereupon God would then have said: then I shall try that again later, but first I shall do something else. That is seriously taught that way. From a human point of view the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus is viewed as: unfortunately, they would not have Him, and then He was crucified. But that was already part of God’s Plan long before, which came about from God’s foreknowledge. It was part of “the determinate counsel of God”, as Peter says in Acts 2:23: “Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain”. That was not unforeseen, and the same applies to the unbelief of the Jewish people. You can therefore say: our dispensation is an interruption in the history of salvation of the Jewish people, but that does not make it an interruption in the work of God. In verse 11 Paul says that all these things are part of God’s original plan. So any theory that says something went wrong once is in conflict with what stands here. That is the observation from a human point of view, but we should view the things from God’s point of view, and then it is part of His Plan. According to the eternal purpose that He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. With that we are literally back in Ephesians 1:4, where it says that the Church “hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world”. God’s predetermined plan concerning Christ Jesus is also God’s plan concerning the Church.

Ephesians 3:12
12 In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him. This serves as the introduction to the practical application of the preceding things. What we are to do with them in practice is only set out from chapter 4:1 onwards. In between stands this prayer of the apostle Paul, as a transition between the relatively theoretical exposition and the practical consequences that follow from it. “By the faith of him” is in some editions of the KJV a printing error. It should read “by the faith of him”. I read the verse thus: “In whom we have boldness and access”. For boldness and access are almost a pleonasm. These two words say almost the same thing. In the Epistle to the Hebrews you learn what the Apostle understands by the word “boldness”. What meaning and applications he attaches to the word, so that you know what that boldness is for. There it is said that we should draw near, or come, both terms are used, “with boldness unto the throne of grace” (Hebrews 4:16). Or that we should “enter with boldness into the holiest” (Hebrews 10:19). That means that we, who have become children of God and priests, should, when we come to this recognition, draw the practical consequences and therefore present ourselves to the High Priest with the message: Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? We should report for practical service under the New Covenant.

We have in Him access with boldness and with confidence, it says. And then: “by the faith”. That is a peculiar construction, because “confidence” is really the same word as “faith”. In many languages there is not even a different word for it. Confidence is faith, and faith is confidence. Or even shorter: “faithfulness”. Only because the word is twice the same, translators, for reasons of style, think different words should stand in English. Nevertheless, it is twice the same word. The thought is that we who believe, with our faith, should come with boldness. And then it says “by the faith of him”. I would prefer to read: “We have boldness and access with confidence, by the confidence of him”. The faith of Jesus Christ, as it is extensively dealt with in the Epistle to the Galatians and in the Epistle to the Romans. Our whole position, our salvation, has namely come forth from the faith of Jesus Christ. That we can be saved comes from the fact that the Lord Jesus was, is, and will remain a believer. If He had not submitted to the Truth and had not had a true heart, He would not have served His heavenly Father and would not have brought us to God by way of the cross. Out of His faith we are justified. The Bible teaches that many times (among others Romans 3:22–23). The possibility of going to Him exists because of His faithfulness to the One who appointed Him to the service, and therefore He is also faithful to us, for that is His commission. He would keep us, so that we should not be lost from this world, and care for us, as John 17 teaches, which we know as “the High Priestly Prayer”. The words “draw near to”, “come to”, or “enter to” are all three regarded as the translation of the Hebrew “qorban”, which is normally translated as “offering”. But the original meaning is that of “drawing near to”, “going to someone”, and possibly “bringing something to someone”. Hence it is translated as “offering”. The expression “draw near to” in Hebrew has been literally translated into Greek. Since we are His Body, He has offered us, and that is also what Hebrews 10 states.

Ephesians 3:13–14
13 Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.
14 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
Both in verse 13 and in verse 14 the Apostle goes into prayer. In the first place, in verse 13, he prays to the Ephesians. The only conceivable explanation of the verse is evidently not to be drawn from the verse itself, but from the context. For the expression “I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you” becomes understandable in the following verse. The Apostle at any rate calls upon the Ephesians to pray for him, for Paul is in “tribulations”. In the first place, of course, because he is in prison and involved in a lawsuit. Even in those circumstances the Apostle had his ministry—namely, speaking the Word of God to those who came to him for that purpose. In several places, and especially in this Epistle, in chapter 6, he asks for prayer for that. He does not ask for prayer to be released from prison, but for the fact that he might speak the Word in prison. In Ephesians 6:19 the Apostle asks it thus: “…that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel”. Why must prayer be made especially for that? Because there

are also people who come to him, it is true to hear something from him, but not because they are really interested in the Truth. You can draw no other conclusion. If it were only a “willing ear”, then no prayer at all would be needed, for that surely goes by itself. But the whole point is that there are also people who place themselves under the Word of God but are not really interested. Who only want to hear what they already know. They do not come for anything new. They protest when they hear something new, for they want to be confirmed in what they already know. Then there are people who come only to have something new to tell others. It is so interesting that you know something others do not know. The Apostle did not so much want to make the gospel known, but precisely “the mystery of the gospel”. In general those mysteries mean that we as such have absolutely nothing to do with the world. The old man does, but I am not speaking of that. I am speaking of our position as Christians, that we have a heavenly calling, an inheritance, and a special heavenly walk. We have been drawn out of the world and as Christians with responsibility set in heaven and precisely not in the world. We have a share in the heavenly work of the Lord Jesus, and there is protest against that. This specific Church truth does not appeal to the natural man. The Apostle Paul’s problem is therefore not that he has no audience, but that people do not want to hear these things.

Ephesians 3:15–19
15 Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,
16 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;
17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,
18 May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;
19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. Paul says in effect: if you now pray for me, that I might speak the word with boldness despite the opposition there is, then I pray for you: “that he would grant you to be strengthened with might by his Spirit”. Verse 15 is a parenthetical sentence. The main clause of this section, as far as I am concerned, is: “For this cause I bow my knees… that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God”. The Apostle prays that these Ephesians, and thereby all believers, “might be strengthened with might” by His Spirit, and “might be filled with all the fulness of God”. Normally this comes about through the bringing (preaching) of the Word of God.
2 Timothy 3:16–17
16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:
17 That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works. What is needed is that someone brings the Word and that one receives that Word. That one then listens and submits to it. That is the idea, and it is no more difficult than that. The Apostle also says that quite a lot of resistance must be overcome for that, for the simple reason that

these things are a matter of “wrestling… against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Ephesians 6). Against the devil, for he interferes. What is needed is that we open our heart to that Word of God, so that we, from that position, might be instructed by that Word. I think—but I say it with some reserve—that it would be useful for many of us, before opening the Bible or listening to the Word, to turn in prayer to the Lord, that He might give us the power and wisdom to understand what we hear. Not as a ritual, and this lies differently for everyone. But the principle is completely biblical. All this is a spiritual matter. It has everything to do with our disposition and with the Power that works in us. We should submit ourselves beforehand to the work of God and therefore also beforehand believe the Word of God. That is to say, we should first accept the Word of God, even without knowing exactly what it says. Afterwards we acquaint ourselves with what the Word of God tells us, in order then to accept it without any reserve. Then you only have to make your choice once as to Whom you will go, and then only remain faithful, for that is what it is about. Verse 16: The “inner man” has everything to do with our thinking and thereby with our disposition and our spiritual resilience. Our stress resistance. God wants to use us, so that He might realise Himself in us. So that the Life of Christ might become reality in us. So that Christ might take form in us. It stands here so, for it says in verse 17: “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith”. It is a matter of disposition. As long as we consider ourselves important, nothing will come of the Life of Christ in us. Only at the moment we consider Him important can anything come of it. Note that it says “that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith”, for without faith Christ does not dwell in our hearts. “Rooted and grounded in love” always speaks of fellowship, whereby we are therefore founded, “rooted”. In that way we stand firm, we are steadfast. On such a foundation something can be built. The problem with believers through the centuries, up to today, is that they are not so firmly founded. That they, as children, are “tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine” (Ephesians 4:14). We call those “doctrinal currents”, and they come, according to this verse, “by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness”. The purpose of that is also named in this verse: “whereby they lie in wait to deceive”. That is not good then. If you go along with “every wind of doctrine”, you swing one way and then suddenly the other. But that was not the intention. We should be steadfast, independent of the world. Then we do not feel threatened by that world, because we are founded in Christ and in this Word of God. We should not be tossed to and fro. That is what the Apostle aims at in this prayer.

1 Corinthians 15:58

58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord. The intention is that we become mature believers who are no longer dependent on circumstances. That we simply know our position and remain faithful to the Lord. Steadfast and

unmoveable therefore. How do you do that? By “always abounding in the work of the Lord”.
Verse 18 says: “that ye may be able to comprehend”, for that is really the idea. “Comprehend” seems to me a bit highly taken, for it simply concerns that we should make it our own. Whether we thereby also “have insight”, for that is what we understand by the English concept “comprehend”, is still a question. It seems to me a rather arrogant thought to think that we could comprehend, in the sense of see through, the Work of God and the Being of God. But we can indeed make our own the things that are revealed about it. And that is “comprehend”.
1 Corinthians 2:14–15a
14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.
15 But he that is spiritual judgeth all things. It is not a matter of comprehending in the sense of seeing through and understanding. But it is a matter of receiving. The natural man does not receive or “comprehend”. That is the idea. He does not grasp it. You do not need to see through in order still to be able to make it your own. You do not need to be able to see through and explain the Being of God in order still to be able to live out of the Power of God. You do not need to be able to comprehend and explain the Being of the Lord Jesus Christ in order still to be united with Him. If you study systematically, you set those sentences that begin with “that” under one another. To what end is this prayer? Well, that… In practice it naturally concerns the same thing every time: that we might be filled “with all the fulness of God”. That prayer is then directed to “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (verse 14), in whom we “are blessed with all spiritual blessings”. From that Father “the whole family in heaven and earth is named”. He has made all people, all angels, everything that lives. The problem with this verse is that by tradition the expression “with all the saints” is used to weaken the expression “be able to comprehend”. The idea is then: I comprehend a little and you comprehend a little, and we have a few more brothers who also comprehend a little. If you then add all that together, we comprehend “fully” together. And also: one sees it this way and the other that way. That is “the manifold wisdom of God”, and all together that is just a wonderful range of shades. All this is therefore nonsense. The intention of these words is that you might fully comprehend and that I might fully comprehend. That all believers might fully comprehend “the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge”. With “the love of Christ” (verse 19) one should not merely think of the emotions of the Lord Jesus, but of the outworking of the life of Christ and the identity of Christ in creation as such. That is to say, how greatly the qualities of Christ have a positive influence on you and me and on the nations and on the history of salvation. The outworking of that in creation, namely. It concerns the consequences of the Person of the Lord Jesus and in particular of His Work. All that we should come to understand. Whereupon the Apostle solemnly concludes. With that he reaches the high point of this prayer.

Ephesians 3:20–21
20 Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,
21 Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen. The sentence that begins with “unto him” is immediately broken off by the little word “now” and only continues in verse 21, where the word “unto him” is repeated first: “unto him be glory”. That glory of Christ should come to expression in you and me. In the Church. Ephesians 1:23 already said that Christ is the fulness of the Church, and consequently the Church is also the glory of Christ. When Christ shall appear in glory, He appears with the Church, which is His glory. Insofar as the Church, the woman, is the glory of the man, the Church is therefore the glory of Christ. Just as the man expresses his life in the woman, so Christ would express His life in the Church, in us. In Jeremiah 31, where the New Covenant is announced, it is said in verse 22: “…for the LORD hath created a new thing in the earth; A woman shall compass a man.” The man will therefore live in the woman. Through Ephesians 5 this is applied to Christ and the Church. To avoid misunderstanding I say straight away that this is not about bridegroom and bride. Man and woman is the same relationship as Head and body. He shall come with great power and glory. He comes with the Church, and that is 100% biblically sound. But here it is stated differently. Here it is the intention, “unto him be”—that is the subjunctive mood. It is a wish. So it ought to be, namely that Christ should come to expression in the Church. That is the summary of all that has gone before. That was the purpose of the prayer. That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith. That His Spirit may dwell in you. Freely after verse 16. That ye may be able fully to comprehend the love of Christ. Freely after verses 18 and 19. That ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. That is all exactly the same thing. That ye might have a share in Christ. That the glory of Christ might come to expression in us. That comes about through Christ Jesus, and it ought to be for ever. Namely “throughout all ages”. For those who do not understand that: “world without end”. That addition indicates that it does not concern all nations, or all generations of Israel, but that it concerns time. In all generations one after another, for ever. In “the ages to come”, Paul already said in chapter 2. In verse 20 Paul says “…able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think”. And that according to the power that worketh in us. That is that Spirit. That is that power with which we should be strengthened, from verse 16. That God who is able “to do exceeding abundantly” should receive glory. That is rather a subtle statement by the Apostle. For in this parenthetical clause, in which he is in fact speaking about God and according to some is actually pronouncing a blessing upon God, he says: Well, you can pray to be strengthened with might. You can pray for the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. You can pray “for the eyes of your understanding being enlightened”, but just think what the consequences of that might be. You do not know beforehand. We should reckon with the fact that when we submit to Him, He may well do things we absolutely thought impossible. Far above our own expectation and also beyond our own will. For some

that last is a problem, for they would rather keep their own life in their own hands. But that will not do if we call upon God’s help. God is able to do far more than we ask. For He is not our servant. As if: we ask something and then He may or may not give it. But you are not sure. Thinking: you ask something and He gives it to you, is not so. Sometimes yes and sometimes no, and then you still cannot prove whether God did it or whether it was coincidence. I believe in coincidence. There are too many things I have prayed for that did not happen. I no longer go there, and I mean that seriously. What it is about is that God does far more. I asked Paul about that. He said: I was weak and then I prayed to the Lord three times. After that he stopped. (2 Corinthians 12). The Lord said to him: just remain weak. Instead the Lord did something far greater. He did not make Paul stronger, but He gave His own power in Paul. Paul remained just as weak in that way, but the work of God took shape through Paul. Not that Paul’s work took shape with a little help from the Lord, but rather the other way round. God did “exceeding abundantly” above what Paul prayed three times. Three times was therefore also more than enough. I remain of the opinion that we should submit ourselves in prayer to the Lord. However and with whatever words. But we should express to Him that we expect things from Him. Thereby we appeal to the promises He has made to us. But I am also of the opinion that one should not prescribe to the Lord what He ought to do. I do not believe it is beneficial for us to make our plans and then ask Him to please realise them, because we cannot do it ourselves. I know people who have asked the Lord: please take sin out of my life. That is a very obvious prayer and it is prayed astonishingly often. It is also astonishingly seldom answered. Partly because it is not in accordance with God’s plan and certainly not in accordance with His promises. What He gives us is forgiveness. He does not take away the sins. If you think He ensures that we no longer sin, then you have not understood. He does take away the guilt of those sins. He takes away the consequences of them. He gives forgiveness. If it says that we should live out of grace, it also means that He does not take away the sins. They remain. I have had quite a few public discussions about that, but that is simply because people insist that God should take the sins, the unrighteousness, out of their life. Well, He does not. Usually not, and in any case that is not one of His objectives. His objective is that the effects of the sins are taken away and that we should be and remain conscious that we are sinners. Conscious that all we shall be, and all that is done through us of God’s work, is not because of our strength but despite our weakness. Out of the grace of God, namely, and out of the power of God. If you do not want to live out of that, then you can pray as much as you like for the Lord to take your sins out of your life, but He does not do that. He will only take them away where they stand in the way of His work, but that is not quickly the case in practice. For He does not mind at all that it is demonstrated that His grace is stronger than our sins. You have to live with that, and you never become proud of it. It only makes you humble. If you say: Lord, please take my sins away, for otherwise I cannot serve You, then you are wrong, for you can. You had better pray: Lord, I want to serve You. Wilt Thou use me and do what Thou seest fit, what is necessary, for I

am weak. What then happens, I do not know. I cannot predict that, but I do know that what then happens is in any case above what we could have imagined. That is what stands here: “exceeding abundantly”. Perhaps you cannot even imagine it, but that will come in the future, when He who now works that glory in us will indeed reveal it. Not only to us, but even to the world. For that is the future we are on our way to. If I render verses 20 and 21 in practical language, then it stands here: if we want to live to the glory of Christ, that is, we want Him to be glorified in our lives, then He will do exceeding abundantly in our lives. Above all that we can think. Above all that we pray and above our expectation. Thereby we should immediately realise that even when we pray, we do not know what we shall pray “as we ought”.
Romans 8:26
26 Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. This will not prevent us from praying to Him and submitting ourselves to Him. One prays to the One whom one holds higher. From whom one expects help. Whom one respects. Of whom one knows or places oneself in dependence. That is what one should do.

Ephesians 4:1
I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,
This chapter speaks of “the unity of the faith”, as it stands above verse 1 in my Bible at least. It speaks of the oneness of the Church as such. That also flows from what has been brought forward in the preceding chapters. Where it is said that the Church must be regarded as the Body of Christ. The Apostle in fact repeats in verse 1 what he already said in chapter 3:1: “…I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ”.
Here he says “the prisoner in the Lord”, for this position of the apostle Paul corresponds with the position of the Church as such. We are reckoned as “prisoners of Christ”; not as a punishment, that was not the case with the apostle Paul either. He was in prison of his own free will. That was the consequence of his own conscious choice. So it is with us as well. The essence of being a prisoner is not that one is locked up, but that one is withdrawn from normal society. One is placed outside the community, the society. From of old one lost on that moment one’s civil rights, which a normal person in society has. That is also the position we as believers have, at least from God’s point of view. In the preceding chapters the Church has been spoken of as a collective. From chapter 4 onwards the individual consequences of that are spoken of. That is to say: it is nice to know what kind of “thing” the Church is, but what am I to do with it? That latter therefore comes up from chapter 4 onwards. We can make a rough division of the six chapters in the Epistle to the Ephesians. Three of them involves the Church - that apply to every member of the Church. In the last three chapters the individual responsibilities of the believers in that Church is addressed. In the first place we should walk (verse 1), for walk has everything to do with our practical life and also our practical service.

In that fellowship of which we now all form part, we are expected to live in accordance with our future calling—namely that we shall share in the kingship and priesthood of Christ in the future. That is what we wait for, just as Joseph in his prison waited, evidently until he was thirty years old, and walked worthily of the calling for which he was called. “Calling” is to a certain destiny, hence calling is rather synonymous with the term “predestinated” from chapter 1. We should not walk in order to receive a calling. No, it is the other way round. It is as the English saying goes: “noblesse obliges”. What does such a walk look like? Usually we receive no detailed instructions, but a few key words that should suffice to summarise that walk.

Ephesians 4:2
2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;
Lowliness, meekness, and longsuffering all three have to do with the mind and thus primarily with thinking. Closely connected with that, they have to do with disposition, which is bound up with our way of thinking, our thoughts. But “lowliness” means “humility”; “meekness” means that one is “receptive”, that one can listen, that one is open to all sorts of things. That is a meek mind. Meekness is in fact the same as believingness. In the Bible those terms are used reasonably interchangeably. A meek person is inclined to believe, to accept things. We should let the Word of God be written in our hearts with meekness. Or more briefly: we should let it be written in our meek mind. If it is hard, like stone, then it would have to be engraved with force. That happens under the law, but here it concerns the working of the New Covenant, whereby the Word of God would be written in a meek mind, which we have when we come to faith. The intention then is that we should walk in this same meekness. That is therefore also stated. “Longsuffering” is a beautiful word, for it presupposes “a long courage”. We should be patient; we can afford to be, because we have eternal life anyway. With that it has everything to do with the concept of “hope”. “Forbearing one another in love” is the consequence of lowliness, meekness, and longsuffering. It is being patient and therefore bearing far. We have not chosen one another. We have chosen for the Lord, and now we are “stuck with each other”. There is therefore little else for it than to bear with one another and in practice therefore also to forgive one another. The Lord also bears with (forgives) us as long as we are in the flesh. That is our great example in bearing with one another. It may be that we precisely have to learn that through our dealings with one another. “Love” is another word for “fellowship”, explained in the following verse, where it concerns keeping that unity.

Ephesians 4:3
3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
“Endeavouring” is rather an active concept. Something like that costs effort. “Striving” you could also say. “Keep” presupposes that we should not ourselves come to unity, but have been brought to it. We should then keep that unity and “live” it.

John 17:21–23
21 That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.
22 And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:
23 I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. In the High Priestly Prayer the Lord Jesus prays to His heavenly Father concerning that unity in the Church. Of course the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ heard this prayer. He made us one. Because we have received one Spirit, we as believers have been made one Body. We simply cannot bring about that unity, and we should not even try. On the other hand, we can keep that unity, by being conscious that the unity exists and living accordingly. It does not concern unity of the flesh, but “the unity of the Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12). The “bond of peace”, this spiritual unity that we should and can keep, has been brought about by the Spirit. “Bond of peace” means “covenant of peace”, for a “bond” is a “connection”, a “covenant”. That holds things together or connects things to one another. The Old Covenant brought those who lived under it under the law and thus bound them together. The New Covenant is likewise a covenant that brings all believers together, but then under grace. What we call the New Covenant is in the Old Testament in the first place called “an everlasting covenant” (among others Isaiah 55:3), for there is a difference with the Old Covenant. In Ezekiel 34 and 37 it is said, for what was then still future: “And I will make with them a covenant of peace”. The Old Covenant is by definition a matter of conflict. With God, with oneself, with others, and thus possibly with brothers and sisters. But under the “New Covenant of peace” one finds peace with God. And thereby also peace with those who likewise live under that New Covenant.
Ephesians 4:4–6
4 There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;
5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism,
6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. The apostle gives a kind of list—that is, he names many words one after another as examples of that unity. In 1 Corinthians 12:13 he formulates it thus: “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body”. “The hope of your calling” is our hope of sonship, inheritance, or birthright. We all have a share in that, because the whole Church is called in one hope to this sonship. From that one future expectation we all have one Lord, whom we serve. Then we all believe the same thing, for there is only one faith. And also one baptism in Christ, for this concerns our union with Christ (Galatians 3:27). That is called “one body”. It is said “one God and Father of all”. From Him we have received life. He is above every one of us, works through every one of us, and is in every one of us and in that way in “you all”. This is what binds us together, and we should be very conscious of these things. All believers in that connection have an individual responsibility towards their Lord (Romans 14:4) and never a

collective one. Our relationship with the Lord does not run through brothers and sisters, but is direct. The problem is that for lack of a personal and conscious relationship with the Lord and Saviour one is inclined to seek salvation in one another. Then one expects support from one another, but on the other hand one also wants somehow to educate one another. That may all be very well meant—I do not wish to doubt that—but it is completely pointless. It is not the children who educate one another, but a father should educate his children. The children should stay out of that, for that is an individual matter. We should have respect for one another and for the individual position that each child of God as such occupies. That also stands in verse 7.

Ephesians 4:7
7 But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Grace is given to us by God Himself, or by Christ Himself, “unto every one of us”. From the context we should immediately conclude that this does not concern grace whereby sinners are saved, but grace that is given to each child of God. The concept of “grace” is applied under different circumstances, with regard to different people. Here it concerns “gift”, and that is also stated. Gifts always come before grace; otherwise it is no gift. Both words together are used to emphasise that this concerns a gift from God. What kind of gifts those are is worked out a little further on. To each one of us grace has been given, and that grace, or that gift, is different. It knows different “measures”, for it says “according to the measure of the gift of Christ”.
Romans 12:1–6
1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.
2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.
3 For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.
4 For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:
5 So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.
6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us…
First present your body, then follows change of thinking. Then our heart is changed because God’s Word is written in it. After that we begin to realise what the Lord personally wants from us, and He will cause us to “prove” that. Serving the Lord can be in very practical things, even ordinary household matters. Some never change in their thinking because they have never presented their body as a “living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God”. You can study the Bible as much as you like, but it will never influence your thinking if you have not first presented your body as the

“reasonable service” described here. The change of thinking has as its purpose, it says here: “that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God”. If you are not willing to serve Him with your body, why then should your thinking be changed? Why should the Lord take trouble to “guide you into all truth?” (John 16:13). What does the grace (verse 3) consist of that has been shown to Paul? It is his ministry, his task, his great responsibility, which has been given to him by Christ. He would serve, after the Apostle had made himself available for the service of the Lord Jesus Christ. For that he had to be humble and his thinking first had to be changed, and that took some years. Afterwards it gradually became clear what his ministry was. How much responsibility we bear God determines. Of that it is said that it is on the basis of faith. If we are strong believers, then we receive great responsibility. If we are weak believers, then we have only a small responsibility. If I substitute “faithfulness” for “faith”, then the thought is: according to the measure in which we are faithful, He will give us responsibility. That is how it works in society as well. People in employment receive greater responsibility the more faithful they are. If they are not very reliable, they receive less responsibility to bear. That is how it works in the upbringing and teaching of children. You simply have to find out what they can do and how much they can handle. That is the principle, and that is how it stands here: “think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith”. It is simply so that there are different gifts, responsibilities, in that Body of Christ. Just as our different body parts do not all have the same function, so all believers in the Body of Christ do not all have the same function either. But the function they have, they have received from the grace of God, and that is in accordance with our faith—namely our faithfulness—and also on the basis of our ability. What we can handle is in important measure determined by our natural aptitude. If you become depressed quickly and you have to bear great responsibility, that will not succeed. Our old nature does not change, nor does our body, at the moment we become children of God. Only something else comes to dwell in it, and that will have to make use of the body and thus of our old nature. I am very shy, and the Lord does not send me out to go door to door to preach the gospel. Since I have no idea how unbelieving people live, work, dwell, think, I am therefore not the man specifically sent out to bring them the gospel. I do not even know how and on what basis to address them. Since I find personal conversations very difficult, fortunately I do not have to hold so many personal conversations. I cannot do it. I can say it calmly—I am already 50, so now I know that. Fortunately I may simply address you from this place. Because I grew up among believers and in the midst of “the work of the Lord” and all that goes with it, that suits me. I can do something with that. Each one therefore receives a gift according to his ability, for that is what stands in Matthew 25. He gave one so many “talents” and another so many, and yet another only “one talent”. In the English language the word “talent” is used with regard to someone’s natural aptitude. He or she has talent for that, it is then said. In the Bible this word is not used in that sense. Each one according to his ability means that. That had nothing to do with sympathy or

antipathy, but with what someone should be able to handle, as we have discussed with regard to Ephesians 3:7. We were by nature unprofitable (Romans 3:12) but are now made profitable and capable. The intention is therefore that we should now serve God. Since the work of God consists in the building up of the Church, we should contribute to that. That is exactly what is said of the members of this Body. In that Body those members therefore have a function. From grace they have received that function. An appointment to a function therefore, and not the ability to be able to do something specific. It concerns the responsibility to do it. It is nice if you can do something, but if you do not do it, then you have nothing from it. This thought—that God, or Christ, gives to each member of the Church a gift or gifts—is drawn from the Old Testament. That is also the thrust of verses 8, 9, and 10. What stands there is evidently in support of what stands in verse 7, and that thought is taken up again in verse 11.

Ephesians 4:8–10
8 Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.
9 (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?
10 He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things. This comes from Psalm 68:18 ff. , where Church truth is already spoken of. The New Testament explains how the truths of the New Covenant, and in particular also of the Church, can be found in the Old Testament. This truth—that God gives certain responsibilities to the various members of the Church, “spiritual gifts” is the fixed term—is drawn from Psalm 68:18. That verse speaks of the Church.
Psalm 68:18 (note: verse numbering in some editions differs; this corresponds to the quoted text)
18 Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them. The difficulty of the passage ultimately does not lie in “when he ascended on high”. That speaks of His exaltation from death to the right hand of God, as set out at length in Ephesians 1. He has therefore ascended on high. He has given gifts to men—to us, namely. The only remaining difficulty is the question: what does “he led captivity captive” mean? The thought is that this does not refer to a prison in the sense of a building. In the first place the captives themselves are meant. We are “prisoners in the Lord”, drawn from verse 1 of this chapter and from chapter 3. In verse 8 he suddenly speaks of “captivity”. He then means “the captives”, for not only he, but we too are captives of Christ. Are we then locked up? No, for that is not the main idea in concepts such as captives and captivity. As already discussed at the beginning of chapter 3, it concerns being withdrawn from society. In the Bible at least. Whether one is in exile or in prison in that connection is in Hebrew exactly the same thing. The British, incidentally, used to send all their prisoners to Australia, the largest prison in the world at that time. Then they were at any rate far away…Since we have become children of God, we have been

withdrawn from the world, from society. That is not at all a popular thought, for people think that now that we are Christians we have become even better members of society. And so they founded a political party… But we should not speak about that. From God's point of view we have been imprisoned. He has withdrawn us from this world. For two reasons, though I can think of more.

The world is in darkness, and where we are God's children we should not walk in darkness and are therefore withdrawn from the darkness. Also because we should not live under the same curse and under the same wrath—that is, under the same judgement—that has come upon the world (Romans 1:18).

So that the blessings we have received should not immediately also be blessings for the world. What God gives us has in the first place to do with a completely different society—namely in captivity. It has to do with the Church. I once asked Joseph about that, for I always find that the most beautiful picture in this case. Joseph ended up in prison, where they thus formed one "household" together. It is a wonderful picture of the Church, in which Joseph is of course a type of the Lord Jesus, who in the Church gives the orders—and I mean that respectfully. Joseph immediately became the head of the prison. Just as Christ, the Son of Joseph, is Head of the Church, which is reckoned to be the captivity. It is no more difficult than that. You should therefore seek nothing else behind the concept of "captivity" in verse 8 than the Church.

Afterwards we can go deeper into it and say: yes, but it says: "he led captivity captive", for that seems a better translation of this verse. In other words, we were perhaps carried away with Christ when He ascended into heaven. The point, however, is that when "he ascended on high" God seated Him at His right hand. Already then He had "led captivity captive", for it says in Ephesians 1: "we have been seated with Christ in the heavenlies" and thus withdrawn from an earthly society. That is not difficult. The only difficult thing in the construction of that sentence is that the Church was reckoned to be captive before we were carried away. For when we came to faith we became captives of Christ, seated with Him in the heavenlies, born again and citizens of heaven. Then we became captives. But what stands here is that we already were. Namely since and on the basis of the exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself we are captives of Christ. So it was also in Egypt, for in that prison there were already captives when Joseph was put with them. Those captives then suddenly became captives of Joseph, or under the leadership of Joseph. Or captives with Joseph, that is also possible, but they were already captives. The statements in Psalm 68 apply there to Israel. The whole story is then applied to the Church. We may still be "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel" by earthly standards, but nonetheless, by God's standards, we have indeed come to share in Israel. We have therefore been gathered to a fatherland that has been promised to us. Only it turns out to be in heaven. Verse 9: "…he ascended; what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?" Who ascended into heaven to be appointed there as High Priest?

John 3:13–15
13 And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.
14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:
15 That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. “He that came down from heaven” is “the Son of man which is in heaven”. There He has a function. What is said here looks forward to what, at the time of the conversation between the Lord Jesus and Nicodemus, would come about in the foreseeable future. These words were written by John after the ascension, after the exaltation of Christ. This “Son of man” is then in heaven. He has then been exalted “that whosoever believeth in him… should have eternal life”. What Paul says in Ephesians 4:9, the Lord Jesus says to Nicodemus. Namely that He ascended on high. For that He must first have descended. It concerns the humiliation and the exceeding exaltation (Philippians 2:9) of the Lord Jesus. Both in Ephesians 4 and in John 3 it is a quotation from Psalm 68. He first descended from heaven to “the lower parts of the earth”. Here therefore it concerns only earth and heaven. The realm of the dead, which is under the earth, outside creation (= heavens and earth), is not involved here. The earth (dry land) is “the lower parts of the earth”. Here it is simply said that He descended from heaven to the earth and then from the earth ascended to heaven. Because He first descended to earth, at His ascension He officially “led captivity captive”—for that is Joseph or Ephraim. That is the beginning of “the dispensation of the grace of God” (Ephesians 3:2) and the coming into being of the Church. Believers in this dispensation are therefore “seated with Christ in the heavenlies”. There we have received gifts from Him. There we dwell with Him and there He dwells in our midst. That is exactly how Psalm 68 formulates it. The underlying thought in all this is that man is in any case not suited for heaven and cannot “ascend into heaven”. Only the One who first descended from heaven can do that. This therefore concerns “heavenly things”, and about those the Lord Jesus tells Nicodemus, in the context of “the kingdom of God” (verses 3, 5), after first saying that the Jewish leader, and all Israel, should repent here on earth. Verse 11: “If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?” After this conclusion He then tells of those heavenly things, written down by John in 3:13–15. The Lord Jesus became Man, and when He was Man He went to heaven at His resurrection. The next thought is then: Since a Man has entered heaven, heaven is open to man, and so we come to Church truth, about the Church as “captivity”.

Ephesians 4:11–12
11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;
12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ;
Here a relatively short list is given, compared with that in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12. The Apostle says that these different functions of the

different members of the Church all pursue one common purpose. Namely “for the perfecting of the saints”; that the saints should grow up and become mature. The gifts are there for service, “for the work of the ministry”. That is for the building up (edifying) of the Body of Christ. 1 Corinthians 14:12: “Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church”. Where we have become profitable we are involved in this only work that God does in our days. Not all gifts that may possibly exist are named. It remains at “some”. The gifts are in general not specified. It does not concern a specifically defined area, but doing things that are simply necessary. Usually that depends on circumstances, time, and place. But there are still some responsibilities—for that is what it is about—that can be described rather precisely, because they are specific responsibilities with regard to the ministry of the Word. When it no longer concerns the Word, it is no longer specified, for then it simply concerns gifts in general. As regards the responsibility to serve with the Word, the Bible uses a number of synonyms, for there are not so many different responsibilities.
Here in Ephesians 4:11 four specific “offices” are named:
1. apostles 2. prophets 3. evangelists 4. pastors and teachers.
There are four, for it is not some to pastors and some to teachers, but “some to pastors and teachers”. The “pastor” is a type of “teacher”; otherwise he would not fit in this list. The function of pastor in the Church is the function of teacher. The problem is that in our circles too the term “pastor” is used as a biblical term, but then in an unbiblical meaning. According to the Bible we do not have pastors as well as teachers in the Church. Insofar as we have pastors in the biblical sense of the word, they are teachers. Where “pastor” is used in jargon for some office in the Church, a wrong meaning is attached to it. Also to the word as such, for then it is evidently used in the sense of sheepdog. In church circles it is namely said that it concerns “keeping the sheep together”. But that is not the responsibility of the shepherd; there are dogs for that. The shepherd should lead the sheep to “green pastures” (Psalm 23:2). To the food therefore. The shepherd must ensure that the flock has food. “Apostles and prophets” more or less corresponds with “evangelists and teachers”. Apostles, those who have been sent out, are in any case evangelists. “Apostle” means “sent one”. A missionary, but then with the particularity that he has been sent by the Lord Jesus personally. Namely the visible Jesus. Hence the Lord Jesus appeared to Paul. If that had not been so, Paul would to our way of thinking have been a missionary, to Greek thinking an “apostolos”, but to biblical thinking no apostle. An apostle is therefore sent by Jesus. I deliberately did not say Christ, for it emphatically concerns the person of the Lord Jesus. They preach the gospel. It concerns the preaching of the gospel in the first place. Then the preaching of the Word in general. An apostle, prophet, is sent out among the ignorant, the unbelievers. A prophet was someone who spoke the Word of God directly. An apostle is therefore also a prophet. Every apostle was a prophet, but not every prophet was an apostle. Hence the Bible speaks of apostles and prophets. That is one category. We already came across the expression in Ephesians 2:20: “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets”.

There is a tendency nowadays to use the word “prophets” anyway, attaching a different meaning to it. But in our days, since there are no longer apostles, there are no longer prophets. No one receives the Word directly from God to pass it on. Why not? In the first place it is not necessary for anything, for we have the complete Bible and thereby God’s Word in writing. In addition it is contrary to the nature of our dispensation, in which the Lord hides Himself. In the beginning there were therefore prophets who explained the nature of our dispensation. They were prophets in that, but no longer than necessary. For apostles and prophets are foundation-layers. That is also found in 1 Corinthians 3:10–12, where Paul describes himself as an apostle and foundation-layer. Apostles-prophets unveiled the things that were hidden in the Old Testament. Since in the beginning there were not yet New Testament writings by which those mysteries could be revealed, prophets were needed. Those apostles-prophets wrote these New Testament books. And since it has been written down, it is no longer necessary for those prophets to exist. At the same time the foundation of the Church was laid. Once that has been laid, you have no further need to look back to it. Then you no longer need foundation-layers either. Because the Lord would finally hide Himself in our dispensation, He sent prophet-apostles so that present truth might be set down in Scripture. Personally I am of the opinion that it is in any case a wonder that we still have that Scripture. He has evidently also taken care of that. He has ensured that this Word of God would be preserved. Christ does not speak apart from His Word, and that stands in the Bible too.
Revelation 22:18–19
18 For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book:
19 And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. The Bible is finished. What there was to say has been said, and therefore God is silent. When we ask the Lord to please make certain things clear to us, the answer is: read My Book. He does not make Himself known apart from His Word. If that were so, we would no longer need the Bible. And I know only one who has an interest in our no longer needing the Bible. He therefore also makes us wise that there are prophets in our days who receive the Word directly from God. It is as simple as that. If someone could say out of inspiration: Thus saith the Lord, then he would immediately close his Bible and never need it again. If the Bible teaches that God does not speak directly to them, but one still stubbornly maintains that, then we know by whom it is really spoken…Of the four functions named, therefore, two remain in these days. One of the two is directed inwardly to the Church, for the evangelist is directed outwardly to preach the gospel. In that way the Church is built quantitatively, by people being added to it. The office of teacher is directed inwardly to the Church—namely to those who form part of the Church because they have come to faith. The teacher gives instruction in Scripture, and the intention is that all those believers should come to faith in what God has spoken. And also live in practice out of that

faith. Some are afraid of it and keep the Bible closed, for then you know nothing and do not have to believe it either. It does not concern knowing the Book by heart, but learning to know Christ—the One namely who is set before us in that Book. That is what the Bible is about; hence: Christ is the Word of God and vice versa: the Word of God is Christ.

Ephesians 4:13
13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ;
Here the purpose of what has been said in the preceding verses is indicated—namely “the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God”. That is “one faith” from verse 5. One faith in the same thing. In the Christian churches it is really not an issue what you want to believe. You may decide that for yourself, as long as you submit to the church rules—that is roughly what it comes down to. I recently saw a clip of a discussion about the proposal to hold church services of a Christian church together with Muslims, in which the imam and the minister would take turns leading. After long deliberation the minister said he still did not feel inclined to it, but if the possibility is being discussed, then you know that sooner or later it will indeed happen. That is the direction things are going, for the antichrist has his share in the unification of all religions under one world government, with Babel as capital. Or: one faith in Him. That says nothing as long as we do not know Him. If you do not know who or how He is, how would you believe Him? The same applies to the Bible. How would you believe the Word of God if you do not know it? The purpose of this is to come to “the knowledge of the Son of God”. We should come to practical fellowship, as it is called, with the living Christ. As we come to know with the understanding who the Lord Jesus Christ is, it will inevitably result in our becoming like Him in our thinking and in our practical life. That cannot be otherwise. If on earth you occupy yourself with someone, study his or her life—for example to write a biography—then you must have a bond with that person. That bond only grows stronger the more you are occupied with it. It is a matter of identification, and that is also the biblical idea. Children do that with their parents too. They take over their ways, their manner of speaking, and their behaviour. They need examples. In children this comes out most strongly, but in people generally it is the same. “A perfect man”, singular. That therefore concerns the Church, and “perfect” means “mature”. We as individual believers should become mature, so that thereafter there might be such “a perfect man”, “the Body of Christ”, in verse 12. An organism, fully grown and mature “unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ”. He is that Man. Where we realise these things, we therefore realise that we are members of this Organism and that we are expected to know our position in it and bear our responsibility. And that “unto that measure” in which we have received responsibility. Not more and not less. That measure is therefore our personal responsibility. The Lord has given us something, and we should hold to that measure. We should therefore learn in practice, as individual

believers, to know our ministry, to know what we stand for, and for what the Lord wants to use us.

Ephesians 4:14
14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;
A work is being done on individual believers so that they should no longer be children, in the sense of immature ones, or literally “minors”. Those who still have nothing, have nothing to say. Children do not make the decisions, because there is still too little word in them. Minors still have no right to speak, simply because they are not sufficiently and not broadly enough informed. Even as children of God we should listen and not speak first. If you want to learn something, you should not talk; you should listen well and then think. We are no longer minors when we have come to the knowledge of the Son of God, of the Word of God. Where the word of Christ dwells richly in us, we have the right to speak. Then our word is “always with grace, seasoned with salt” (Colossians 4:6). Then we speak our own words, it is true, but we really bring forward the thoughts of God. A minor is someone because he has too little knowledge of the Word. That is why one is “tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine”. Then one is without rudder and drifts in all directions. With every current, but here it is translated as “wind”, which is normally the translation of the Greek “pneuma”, also translated as “spirit”. The Greek “anemos” should be translated as “current”, and then it becomes “current of doctrine”. Our expression “doctrinal current” probably comes from that. Many are of the opinion that you should especially go with the flow, for that makes life a bit easier. Then you keep more friends, because it causes less division. Just join in then. But my Bible says: “Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil” (Exodus 23:2). That applies in particular with regard to human philosophy and also in all sorts of “Christian consultations”, for that is what this is about. Children can be made to believe anything. The child is “pliable” and can be shaped. As long as we are children—minors—we are susceptible to every current into which one wants to draw us. It does not say for nothing “every wind of doctrine”. That is also what happens in practice when there is protest against being occupied with Scripture. All protest against Bible study is always argued with the reasoning that it brings so much division. Yes, of course it brings division, for as soon as one occupies oneself with Scripture, one will no longer drift with the current, and then you have division. Then we are astonishingly troublesome people. That is not the goal, but it is usual. I once asked Christ about that. He was especially very troublesome for the Pharisees and stood so much in the way that they murdered Him. He did not go with the current of Judaism, because He held fast to the Scriptures. Thereby He held back “the current”, and they thought it better to remove Him out of the way. Which happened, and the same has happened to many of His followers. Verse 14 also tells where that “current” comes from: namely “by the sleight of men”. What is here translated as “sleight” is derived from the word “cube”, and thereby from a die in a dice game—and of that you

never know how it will fall. In general one should translate this word as “chance”. One time the whole lot flies that way, and the next time everything flows the other way again. So years ago people thought we should all suddenly pray 24 hours a day. You cannot keep that up, so they started relay praying. One team relieves the other. When I hear such things, I think: that sounds like praying to Baal (1 Kings 18). What idea did they actually have about that? Then we had a period when we all had to humble ourselves. In practice that meant we had to fall on our knees before one another and confess one another’s sins. I am not even speaking of still more extreme things, for example that we should all suddenly fall backwards as proof that we have received the Spirit. And so there are many more examples. All currents, childish goings-on, in which everyone seems to join. But yes, children are not wise yet…
That comes from “cunning craftiness”, and that is again meant “whereby they lie in wait to deceive”. It even says “craftiness” twice. “Craftiness” is a psychological game. Someone who is “crafty” is someone who is clever, it is true, but applies it in a negative way. That is exactly what this is about. We are therefore warned not to let ourselves be carried away by people or by doctrines. We should stand firm in the Truth and in Love, and we should grow up into Christ.

Ephesians 4:15–16
15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:
16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love. We should no longer be minors, but become of age, by being instructed in the Word. “Speaking the truth” means knowing, understanding, and believing the Truth, but also practising it. That truth should be part of our walk of life, of our conduct. With “Christ: from whom” you should immediately be reminded of the expressions in chapter 2:21–22, where it is said that “Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth”. These expressions are used again here, but verse 16 speaks of “the whole body” that “maketh increase of the body”. The Temple from chapter 2 and this Body from chapter 4 are completely the same. Growth does not come from any organisation, or from ourselves. It comes only from Christ. As we live in fellowship with Him and are His followers in practice, we shall become mature. That is the intention for each of us, for all members, for all the saints. In that way “the whole body fitly joined together and compacted”. And that too is an expression to give again the unity of the Church. “Supplieth” means “bringing towards one another” and therefore “connecting to one another”. The thought is that here it speaks of the way in which body parts are connected to one another—namely with muscles or “ligaments”. It concerns everything being connected in an orderly way. A close unity of believers. When it concerns the Church as Temple, built from living stones that are joined to one another, we have an example of that in the Old Testament. For the temple of Solomon the stones were

hewn out of the rocks in the quarries. They were made to size there on the spot, in such a way that after transport to Jerusalem they only had to be set together. They fitted perfectly on the building site. That was “fitly framed together”. “According to the effectual working in the measure of every part”. Each one’s own responsibility, his ministry, can therefore be measured. As we have seen earlier, there is in that connection “diversities of gifts”, “ministries”, or “workings” (1 Corinthians 12:4–6). In “God that worketh all in all” (verse 6) all this is joined together into a practical unity. Each member of the Body must know his function, and then it becomes one whole and works as one whole. That is “unto the edifying of itself in love”. The term “in love” means “in fellowship”, “in unity”, “in connection with one another”. That is what love is, but love at the same time presupposes serviceableness, serving one another. One loves one another in practice by serving one another. In the Bible the well-known Greek word “agapē” is used. That does not mean that one has warm feelings for one another, but that one draws consequences from it and serves one another. Where one serves one another, one loves one another.

John 21:16

16 He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

Peter said: “Thou knowest that I love thee”, and then the Lord Jesus said: “Feed my sheep”—in other words: then you must serve Me, if that is so. In love the feelings, the abstract, do not come first, but rather really serving Him in practice, including possible consequences. That makes the difference between serving believing children of God and believers who live according to the principles of the world. Born-again children of God for whom their new birth has no effect whatever in their practical life. This category, which we know very well, you do not find in the Bible, for it really should not exist.

Ephesians 4:17

17 This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind,

The Apostle goes into the personal circumstances, the personal way of life and attitude of the believers. He in fact summarises what he has said before. That is the meaning of “This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord”. What now follows he has in fact already said, but now he tells it in a different and more personal way. The natural walk of life of man comes from his thinking, from thoughts that are to a high degree fed and directed by the flesh. It is “the vanity of their mind”. Thoughts are to a high degree directed and influenced by “the god of this world” (2 Corinthians 4:4). The expression “god” means that Satan occupies a religious position. If you were to look for Satan somewhere, then it is in the religious sphere. The official Christianity is absolutely not exempt from that—on the contrary, that seems logical to me too, for that is where the devil has everything to gain. You should especially expect him within so-called Christianity. In general church history proves that. In Scripture the thought is that Satan rules the world, and thereby humanity, through the flesh. He appeals to

the flesh of man. In James 1 it appears that Satan appeals to the natural desires of man and in that way knows how to deceive him. In any case he knows how to lead outside the Word and outside the will of God. That goes through the thinking. Our walk of life as children of God should also come from the heart, from the thinking, from the mind. That is what the Apostle says in these verses. For that our thinking should be changed, so that we no longer “walk as other Gentiles walk in the vanity of their mind”. So that we no longer walk in darkness, but in the Light.

Ephesians 4:18
18 Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart;
Verse 18 states that the natural man walks from his darkened understanding and ignorance because of the hardness of his heart.
Romans 1:21–24
21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.
22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,
23 And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.
24 Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves:
Where one does not acknowledge God—in the form of glorifying Him, giving thanks to Him, or serving Him—all “imaginations” have no function whatsoever, for “their foolish heart was darkened”. What is foolish about their heart and in their imaginations? Well, that they do not submit to God, for that is what it comes down to in practice. Or in other words: they do not believe in Him. When there is a nature documentary on television, I always notice that people usually do not recognise or acknowledge God, the Creator, at all. They speak of things that stand in the place of God. Then they say nature does this or that, or nature has arranged it so and so. Nature keeps itself in balance, and so on. Or evolution has arranged it that way. What utter nonsense, all of it. In practice they place the course of events in nature, evolution, in the position that according to the Bible is occupied by the true God. But however they name it, it is God who does all this. He is the supreme power and might in this world. Of course people believe that there is in some way a coherence in creation. Of course man knows “a god”. He simply does not want to call Him “God”. He does not want to see Him as a thinking Being, for if God is a thinking Being, it means that we, as creatures, are accountable to the Creator. And evidently that is what they do not want. That is: “professing themselves to be wise, they became fools”. Thereby they have “changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things”. As far as I am concerned that simply concerns man. Where one reasons God away, one suddenly has great respect for man, who should be as God. Or for the

animal world. We people nowadays do not stand in the service of God, but in the service of the environment. We must ensure that it is preserved. We must serve the environment, the “birds and fourfooted beasts and creeping things”. That has been put in the place of man. That is what stands here. They have honoured the creature above the Creator. That one must serve man is simply preached from the pulpit in Christian churches. Man is placed in the position of God. They teach there that we must believe in man, but I have no reason whatever to believe in man. On the contrary. A few thousand years of human history will rob us of all faith in man. We should not believe in man—precisely not. We should believe in God who has spoken, in the promises of God, and in the work of God and therefore in the Word of God. Not serve the creature, but serve the Creator. Where we serve the creation, we place it—and ourselves—in the place of God. Then “the truth of God is changed into a lie”. But that “own wisdom” is foolishness in God’s eyes. In Romans 1 it is said three times, extensively and with great emphasis, that God has given up the world, humanity as such (“gave them up”). In the sense that thereby man is free and God no longer restrains him from doing what he wants. In that way man comes to “uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts”. Where does that lead? Where does that “darkened understanding”, “foolish heart”, “walking in the vanity of their mind”, that “being alienated from the life (= the fellowship) of God” lead?

Ephesians 4:19
19 Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. This is the consequence, and God no longer restrains man in this dispensation. It is also the thrust of the Gospel of John, in which the Lord is presented to us as the Light of the world, but at the same time on almost every page it is said that that Light would disappear again and that the world would be left in darkness. Paul is here also speaking of those things. “The world knew him not, his own received him not” (John 1:10–11), and so the Light disappeared from the world. “Hardness of heart” (verse 18) means that one is no longer open to arguments. That ignorance (verse 18) among people comes from their unbelief, from not wanting to know, from hardening themselves, from being unwilling to receive the most obvious answers to the most obvious questions. Does God exist? If you are wise, you immediately say yes, of course. If you are unwise, you say no—but that is simply only because man does not want to know and has no intention of reckoning with God. This situation applies to the whole world. We may be inclined to think that many who have never heard the gospel are waiting to hear it. That is not so. Most people have no interest in it. The book of Acts already teaches that in one generation the gospel was brought to all nations (among others Colossians 1:23). It was made known to the world long ago, but the world did not want to accept Him. It was preached, so that from God’s point of view the world has since been generally a rejecting and therefore unbelieving world. Then he says that, because he intends to go through life as a god himself. He wants to determine his own way, to try to realise his own thoughts. Nothing comes

of that in the end, certainly not, but that is what man often does. Thereby he rejects every reference to God, to His Word, or to a plan of God. Man therefore becomes ignorant through “the blindness of their heart”. Hardening through unbelief is a very simple process. Where one rejects things, one becomes insensitive to precisely those same things. Why would one accept what is preached the second time if one has already rejected it the first time? The third time one does not even hear it any more. One has become calloused to it. It no longer means anything to them. In practice the gospel surely only reaches the right place—namely where one is seeking. Where one is open to it. Where the seed falls into good ground. For you can scatter the seed around you, or carefully and systematically sow it, but if there is no “good ground” (Matthew 13), then it has no result. Then it does not even take root and naturally bears no fruit. I am not saying that we should therefore not tell the gospel everywhere the opportunity presents itself, that we should not scatter that seed. I am only saying that we should not expect too much from it. Why is there so little response to the preaching of the gospel? That lies in the ground into which it falls. And that we do not control. Those people whose hearts have become calloused have “given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness”. That is in a greedy way. One directs oneself towards uncleanness. Usually one thinks only of sexual misconduct, but of course that is not the only thing it concerns. It concerns the whole life of man. Unclean, meaningless, marked by unfaithfulness, and so on. And directed towards everything other than the Creator Himself.

Ephesians 4:20–21
20 But ye have not so learned Christ;
21 If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus:
The thought in verse 20 is that man should have been instructed by Christ. For He is the Word of God. He is the Light of the world. He is Wisdom. He is the One in whom “are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:3). In short, we should therefore be instructed by Him. And we are expected to have been instructed by Him, for that is what it says. The epistle is of course, like all epistles, written to believers. They have heard and accepted the gospel and are therefore expected to know that one should indeed submit to the Lord Jesus Christ and His Word. And so the Apostle says: that is what you have been taught, and he refers back to what we have been taught. Verse 21 is really a side remark, as a comment on the fact that we have been instructed by Christ in verse 20. In verse 21 he says: well, insofar as that is so, in the sense of, that depends on the extent to which we have been instructed by Him. But the intention is that we should hear Him, that we should be taught by Him. For the truth we should learn is in Jesus. The remarkable thing about that is that it first says “ye have not so learned Christ” and then says that “the truth is in Jesus”. Christ is by definition the One who has meanwhile “sat down on the right hand of God” (among others Hebrews 10:12). The term “Christ” always points to the result of His walk, or of His life, of His

ministry, of His service. It points to the result of His faith. When it then says “as the truth is in Jesus”, we are referred back to who Christ was, “in the days of his flesh” (Hebrews 5:7).
When He lived on earth as man, under the human name Jesus. The name He received at His birth. We have been instructed by Christ in the truth that is in Jesus—namely that Jesus has become the Christ. That the man Jesus has meanwhile sat down at the right hand of God in heaven. Or as Peter said in Acts 2:36: “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ”. And we also receive the following instruction from Christ:

Ephesians 4:22–24
22 That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;
23 And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;
24 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. We should put off the old man and put on the new man. That is not the same as being born again. To a certain extent those concepts overlap, but here it concerns the practical outworking of that new birth. The continuation of it, and that does indeed have to do with practical life. It says that that old man is corrupted in his life. Not at death, but throughout his life. The traces of someone’s life remain behind. You can simply see them. Not only bodily ageing, but I simply mean everything a man does in his life leaves traces in that life and expresses himself in the body and in behaviour.
Romans 6:23 says: “For the wages of sin is death…” That is not a statement about a sinner one day dying. Romans 6 is not about that. It speaks about the practical walk of believers. If you live under the law and under sin, then the result of that is death. Death works out, even while that man is still alive. On the other hand stands “the gift of God”, namely “eternal life”. That too is a very practical concept, for we should in practice live that Life. If you want to be delivered from the dominion of the law, there is only one way: by placing yourself under grace and living out of it. You cannot simply put off the old. The new must come in its place, and that is also what stands here through “put off the old man” and “put on the new man”. In between it is said: “…be renewed in the spirit of your mind”. Through that thinking, through the change of our thoughts and imaginations, these things should come about. How can you change your thoughts? How do we get a new mind? By giving your heart to the Lord Jesus? No, that is not what it is about. Change of thinking only takes place after that, if all is well, when we fill our heart and thoughts with the Word of God. That will also give a different direction to our “walk”. Really putting on the new man cannot be done. You cannot say from one day to the next: now I am someone else. You can be changed in thinking. And as Romans 12 says, for that purpose one should begin “by presenting your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God”. That change takes time.

Philippians 3:12–14
12 Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.
13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,
14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. If Paul says this, we should not imagine anything on this score. What it is about is that this is the only way whereby our empty hearts, or darkened hearts, are filled with the Light of the Word of God. That would change our thinking and thereby our being, our disposition, and subsequently our practical life. In that way we put off the old man and put on the new man, of which it is said: “which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness”. Not the old man, but the new man is “created after the image of God” and “bearer of God’s image”. I have been claiming that for years on the basis of other passages of Scripture, but here it stands explicitly! The statements here about Christ, who is the image of God, are made about the new man in general.
1 Corinthians 15:49
49 And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Moreover it is said of the natural man that he bears the image of the earthy man. But of the new man it is indeed said that we as new men bear the image of Christ. We should then walk worthily of that position and that calling. That is why verse 25 immediately says:

Ephesians 4:25
25 Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another. That the Apostle thinks of this first is easy enough to understand, for we should know the truth and practise it—namely the Truth that is in Jesus. And therefore we should put away lying. The lie in the singular. “Wherefore putting away lying”. Which lie? The lie from Romans 1, where it is said that the natural man has changed the truth into a lie and serves the creature instead of the Creator. Put away that lie. We do not serve the creation, nor the creature, nor man. We serve the Truth, and that is in Jesus. The truth is Christ. The lie is everything else and was invented by the devil, who is the father of lies (John 8:44). Verse 25 says “speak truth”. If Christ is the Truth, then we should speak about Christ. That is what it comes down to. We should speak the truth to one another, it says. To our “neighbour”, with the addition “for we are members one of another”. What has been made of this over the course of time… We should serve and love our neighbours, but we hope our neighbour lives as far away from us as possible. I believe that is why the term “distant neighbour” was invented. Which is a contradiction in terms. Such a thing does not exist, any more than dry water. Neighbours are those who are near us. Those who are closest to us are our brothers and sisters. We are even members one of another in the same Body. This sort of exhortation generally concerns the relationship

between believers within the Church. For it concerns one household and one family, of which Christ is the Head. He is not the Head of the world, but of the Church. That goes very far. In the corresponding passage of Scripture, in Romans 12, it even speaks of how we should act towards our enemies (verse 20), but the same principle still applies. Those enemies in Romans 12 are simply brothers and sisters who behave as enemies.

Ephesians 4:26–27
26 Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:
27 Neither give place to the devil. Anger is not to be avoided. It even often has an important function. But anger that remains damages. That should not be in the Church. Anger can “be kindled”—that is said of the Lord Jesus as well at times. That His anger was kindled and that He burst out in wrath, but not in an uncontrolled way. That is then a function. That is even a form of communication, if all is well. That is something different from bursting out in rage. That is why it says “be ye angry”, not in the sense that it must be, but that it can be on occasion. But do not sin thereby, in the sense that if that anger remains, “it misses its mark”, and that is the meaning of the word “sin”. And then it says: “neither give place to the devil”. One should give the devil no room. Where anger gets out of hand and turns into rage, into rancour and revenge and seeking one’s own right, one gives place to the devil. The devil certainly watches for an opportunity to seize the believer, and we should be on guard against that.
1 Peter 5:8 and James 4:7
1 Peter 5:8
Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:
James 4:7
Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.
How does one resist the devil? By submitting to God, serving Him in practice. That is the only way. One submits to God and thereby resists the devil. The devil wants to prevent us from submitting to God. The devil is not the adversary of the world. He is not out for the downfall of the world or of any society or culture. He is out for the destruction of believers. He is our adversary, and we therefore have to do with him. When the world says: we do not believe in the existence of a devil, that is understandable. They do not encounter him, for he is their ally. They are subject to him. That he does not do himself. Where we do submit to God, we withdraw ourselves from the authority of Satan, the adversary.

Ephesians 4:28
28 Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. He evidently speaks of those who steal to provide for their livelihood. It is better to labour, “working with his hands the thing which is good”, not even to provide for one’s own maintenance, but “that he may have to give to him that needeth”. So that the one who is in need does not have to steal. I find that a splendid construction. Does the one who is

in need at the end of the verse not then have to work to provide for his own maintenance? Perhaps some cannot work. That is simply not the point here. This sort of instruction is not given to our brothers and sisters, but to us individually. The responsibility to work, to earn a living, is not the responsibility of our brothers or sisters. If someone is in want, or “needeth”, then we should preferably be able to provide for that need, including material things. And not only for the sake of preachers. We should if necessary provide for the need of all brothers and sisters. In the Netherlands that responsibility nowadays lies with the government. Personally I sometimes regret that we have shifted our Christian responsibility onto the world as such.

Ephesians 4:29
29 Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. In these verses it concerns the practical outworking of what has been described in the preceding three chapters. What it is about in the practice of life is that what comes to us—the Word of God preferably—should also go out from us again. It should pass through us. In and out. Both things should take place, for only that has effect. What is here translated as “corrupt” is translated as “rotten”, “corrupted”, “foul”. It is therefore really something ugly, though the concept is not further specified. When it then speaks of “good” speech, the opposite of “corrupt” speech, it does indeed say what it is about. “Any good speech” is “to the use of edifying”. Is there then also unedifying edification? I think not, and therefore this is a fine example of a pleonasm. It is twice the same thing. What “edifies” is what is “useful”, and vice versa. We have learned that from the first epistle to the Corinthians, for there it is said: “All things are lawful for me, but all things edify not”
(1 Corinthians 10:23). “Edify” has the meaning of “build up”. That is the old English meaning of the term, and it is still used that way in official language. In the Bible it concerns the edifying—namely the building up—of the Church. In the same first epistle to the Corinthians the Church is extensively presented as a building. “Good speech” therefore consists of words that are edifying, for the building up of the Church. That has already been said earlier in this chapter, for there it is said that it concerns “the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (verse 12). What sort of words are those called “any good speech”? That stands directly afterwards: “that it may minister grace unto the hearers”. “Good speech” therefore always concerns words that speak of grace, for we now live in “the dispensation of the grace of God” (Ephesians 3:2) in which God builds the Church from Ephesians 2. They are words that speak grace, perhaps proclaim it, but it always concerns grace. Our whole life should be an application of grace. To ourselves—that must be in the first place—but then to others, of course. If “good speech” ministers grace to those who hear those words, what does corrupt speech do? I can draw no other conclusion than that corrupt speech consists in giving law to those who hear those words. It is simply the opposite, and in other places the apostle Paul speaks in a similar way about it. He can put it even more strongly:

Philippians 3:6–9
6 Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.
7 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.
8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,
9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:
In Philippians it concerns nothing other than the law under which Paul had lived. “Corrupt speech” therefore speaks of the opposite of the law and not of indecent language, or cursing, or such things. What in biblical terms is evil is that law is preached, as though it were the intention that we should live under it.
Matthew 7:22–23
22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?
23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. To people who have used God’s name for their own work, and perhaps even for the work of Satan—for that can all happen—it is said: “I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity!” In the name of God whole peoples have been exterminated with the cry: “God wills it”. In the name of God people have been beheaded, etc., because they would not come to acceptance of what was held before them. (See the book “The Pilgrim Church” by E. H. Broadbent.) That is completely contrary to the longsuffering of God and contrary to the nature of our present dispensation, but it has all happened in the name of the Lord Jesus. In our dispensation grace reigns, and there is no place for law and all that goes with it, such as compulsion. There is therefore no place for “corrupt speech”.

Ephesians 4:30
30 And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. It is perfectly logical that this immediately follows verse 29. I am almost inclined to say that “grieve not the holy Spirit of God” means almost the same as “let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth”, for the simple reason that the Holy Spirit has brought forth the Words of God. If that Spirit dwells in us, then that Spirit will also use our mouth to bring forth those same Words of God. Where we refuse or prevent our mouth from being used for that purpose, “we grieve the holy Spirit of God”. It does not merely concern our mouth, or our speech, but our tongue is after all our most important body part in this connection. If anything goes out from us, if something that dwells in us comes out, it comes out in any case, and in the first place, through speech and only in the second place through hands and feet. If “the word of Christ dwell in you richly” (Colossians 3:16), that would come to expression in the word we speak. Then we do not grieve the holy Spirit of God.

1 Thessalonians 5:19
19 Quench not the Spirit. This has the same meaning as “grieve not the holy Spirit of God”, only here the Holy Spirit is presented as fire. In both cases therefore this applies: “whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption”. Whether we grieve the Holy Spirit or not, we remain “sealed” by that Spirit “unto the day of redemption”. We have already touched on that theme in connection with Ephesians 1:13. “Sealed” means that it is for ever, that it is a mark, that it gives guarantee. We have received eternal life from the Lord, and eternal life would not be eternal life if one could lose it. If we are born again, then that is for ever. If we have received the Spirit, then that is for ever. “Sealed unto the day of redemption” means that the mentioned seal is no longer needed on that “day of redemption”. “The earnest of our inheritance” (Ephesians 1:14) is only needed as long as we are still in the body and as long as we are still exposed to other powers. The purpose of the grace of God and of our new birth is our inheritance. Ephesians 5 says it too, for there it speaks of “inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God”, but we shall come to that. Romans 8 sets out that the ruling principle in our life should not be sin, not the law, but the Spirit. The indwelling Spirit, that is, in accordance with the New Covenant, and that is spoken of from verse 8 onwards.

Romans 8:8–14
8 So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.
9 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.
10 And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.
11 But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.
12 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.
13 For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.
14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.
The thought is that we are dead to God according to the old man, but through the indwelling Spirit have been made alive again to God. Even the body is reckoned to be alive, because the Spirit of God dwells in it. Insofar as that Spirit works in us, it should be so that we use our bodies for God. Thereby in practice we withdraw our body from the dominion of sin, for the intention is that the Spirit in us should be stronger than sin. If we are led by the Spirit in the practice of our life, we are “sons of God”—heirs of God therefore, says verse 14. The sealing (assurance) in the Holy Spirit, which is completed with the redemption of our body, is systematic. Our spirit is redeemed, our soul (= our practical life, our walk) is being redeemed, and our body will be redeemed. We then receive a heavenly and even a glorified body, at what we call “the rapture of the Church”. Bear in mind that “quenching the Spirit”, with which we are sealed, has

consequences for us and even for eternity. That is what Scripture teaches, and that is also what chapter 5 is about. Here the Apostle does not yet go on to that immediately.

Ephesians 4:31
31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:
If you ask me, it is the same every time. It has everything to do with anger, with revenge. With seeking one's own right, with self-realisation—the activity of the old man. This, however, should "be put away from you, with all malice", whatever that may be. In contrast, verse 32 sets:

Ephesians 4:32
32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. It does not even speak of our relationship to or with unbelievers, for that comes only last of all. In the Bible we are expected in the first place to deal with believers, with like-minded people. With brothers and sisters and preferably even with those brothers and sisters who have also "presented their bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God" (Romans 12:1). In the first place we should therefore "be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another". Then you immediately think of Galatians 5.
Galatians 5:22
22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,
"Gentleness" is self-control. That is the most difficult, my father told me, which is why it stands last. Where that "fruit of the Spirit" is, there is no question of "grieving the Holy Spirit". The other way round: where the Holy Spirit is grieved, this fruit does not come about, for it is fruit of the Spirit. It is not pretending, not playing a role, but it concerns being honest and it must come from the heart. Our good words should minister grace to those who have the same hope, "forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you". It is not merely a comparison, but it is also a strong argument. The thought is that where we ourselves have received forgiveness, where we ourselves "have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace" (Ephesians 1:7), we should bestow that same forgiveness and grace on others. All that is as "fruit", the working of the Spirit. Law can in no way be fitted in here at the end of Ephesians 4. That is attempted, for those short sentences are explained far too easily by many as "do this and do that", but that is not it.
Law has hardly any educational value, actually none at all. Law only serves to limit possible damage, to keep things in order, and is only intended for people who cannot bear responsibility. Who are therefore immature. As children of God we should be mature children of God and not live under law, but indeed in liberty (Galatians 5:1). Examples of believers who have gone before us have far greater educational value than law (Hebrews 11; 12:1–2). Our great example is God. We should follow Him, says the Apostle in verse 1 of the following chapter. God has

revealed Himself in the One who “being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God” (Philippians 2:6). Christ therefore, “the express image of his person” (Hebrews 1:3).
Hebrews 1:3
3 Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high

Ephesians 5:1
Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;
Being “followers of God” is completely the same as being followers of Christ. We should be followers of God “as dear children”. Children are expected to follow their parents, and in particular the Father.
Verse 1 says: “God is the example”, and verse 2 says: “Christ is the example”. In what? “As Christ also hath loved us”. We should love one another, exactly as Christ has loved and loves us. The apostle Peter points to that “Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps”. That is in 1 Peter 2:21.
In verse 23 he says what the example consists of. He points there to the Lord Jesus: “Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously”. That is surely a very beautiful example to follow? It is in fact two examples.
Romans 5:8–9
8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.
9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. Twice God has commended His love toward us, it says here. Once through what the Lord Jesus did for us in the past and now through what He, Christ, now does for us as believers. That is also what is brought forward in verse 2.

Ephesians 5:2
2 And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour. I fear this is one of the least understood texts in the whole Epistle to the Ephesians, because it is wrongly applied to the death of the Lord Jesus. In the preceding verses it concerned the outworking of the life of Christ in us, what the Lord does for us. That is still so, and therefore the verse also begins with: “And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us”. Who are those “us”? That is we believers. It is “us”, plural, for the Apostle includes there the addressees of this epistle. It therefore says that Christ gave Himself up for the Church and nothing else. That fits perfectly in the context. Typology is stated here: “given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour”. This giving up of the Lord Jesus is regarded as an offering, and it is then said that it is a sweetsmelling savour. Are there then other offerings? Yes, for the sin offering and trespass offering were not at all “a sweetsmelling savour to God”. The thank offering, the meat offering, and the burnt offering are,

according to Leviticus. Sin offering and trespass offering concern putting away the old; putting away sin and guilt. There is nothing sweetsmelling about death. Those offerings were obligatory, but burnt offering, meat offering, and thank offering were voluntary offerings. Precisely for that reason those offerings were “a sweetsmelling savour to God”. The three sweetsmelling offerings speak of the new life, of resurrection, and what will ultimately result from that.

When Romans 12:1 says: “that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God”, it concerns the resurrection life we have received still in this old body. We then offer this old body to the Lord. In the Bible “offering” means that the life, or what is offered, is placed in the service of God. It is the same as “offering”, namely “presenting”, “placing at disposal”. It is therefore the intention that the offering lives. In many offerings the old life disappeared first. Not on the altar, for animals are not slain on the altar, but on the slaughter place. Afterwards their body is laid on the altar, and God does something with it. Only after we are dead can we offer ourselves to the Lord, and the offering begins. That old man must be dead—at least by God’s standards—and afterwards He makes it alive and can use it. When the Bible speaks of an offering that the Lord Jesus Christ brought, it never concerns His death, but always His resurrection and what follows thereafter. In the Christian churches it is really not an issue what you want to believe. You may decide that for yourself, as long as you submit to the church rules—that is roughly what it comes down to. I recently saw a clip of a discussion about the proposal to hold church services of a Christian church together with Muslims, in which the imam and the minister would take turns leading. After long deliberation the minister said he still did not feel inclined to it, but if the possibility is being discussed, then you know that sooner or later it will indeed happen. That is the direction things are going, for the antichrist has his share in the unification of all religions under one world government, with Babel as capital. That also teaches the Epistle to the Hebrews.

In chapter 10, for example, where the High Priest (Christ) remains, because He has eternal life. His work includes offering something, and that therefore has nothing whatever to do with His death preceding His appointment as High Priest. He “offered”; He presented His Body as “a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God” (Romans 12:1). That Body is we, as Paul teaches in both Hebrews and Colossians.

Romans 8:32

32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

Here it concerns that Son whom God appointed or begot on the well-known “today” (Acts 13:33)—namely the Risen One, whom He “delivered up”. And it then appears that God will with Christ freely give us all things. That therefore concerns His Life and not His death. The risen Lord Jesus gives, or presents, His Life for the sheep. He is the “good shepherd” and leads His sheep to green pastures. The “Lamb of God” took away the sin of the world (John 1:29), and the Son of God is given for the sake of His Body.

Ephesians 5:3
3 But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints;
We believers are sanctified for and unto the service of God. Among the saints “fornication”, “all uncleanness”, or “covetousness” should not even be named. We regard “fornication” and uncleanness as synonyms. Covetousness also belongs in the list, for here it concerns an egocentric life. Uncleanness, fornication, and covetousness always have to do with seeking one’s own interests. It is directed towards the satisfaction of fleshly desires. It is directed towards man himself. In our service to the Lord we should not be directed towards ourselves. The Lord Jesus is not that either. Therefore let fornication, uncleanness, or covetousness “not be once named among you—the saints”. Let it not be found among you. And then the list is extended in verse 4.

Ephesians 5:4
4 Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. This sort of “list of vices” always in practice speaks of seeking the self, the ego. The man who seeks himself. But that should not be so. On the contrary, there should “rather” be “giving of thanks”. Thereby we do not seek ourselves, but the honour of God. It does not say “but rather much prayer”; that you must ask the Lord for what you need. Strictly speaking that is also a matter of being directed towards oneself. It is, to a certain extent, often also a prayer for the satisfaction of one’s own desires. The thought is that whatever we are, whatever we have, we are expected to live out of grace. All that we have should not constantly need to be supplemented because we are still so lacking. Everything we have we have in any case out of His grace, and for that we should thank Him. It is better to thank the Lord for what we have than to pray for what we do not have. I did not say the latter is not good, but it really comes only after thanksgiving. For example for the fact that we may serve God. It is permitted to us to do the good works (Ephesians 2:10) out of His grace. “For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake” (Philippians 1:29). And: “…let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear” (Hebrews 12:28). If you do not serve God, then only your own works remain. That is no more than “wood, hay, stubble”, in 1 Corinthians 3:12–13.
Fire will go into that. That speaks not of the judgement upon unbelievers, but of the judgement upon the works according to the flesh of believers. I have no problem with those being burned. As long as enough other things remain. When “wood, hay, and stubble” burn, “gold, silver, precious stones” naturally remain. If at least those are there. What exactly “filthiness, foolish talking, or jesting” is, I do not know. Roughly, though, for they are indeed meaningless things. That is “foolish talking” in any case and “jesting” too. That should not characterise our walk. On the contrary, for verse 5 says:

Ephesians 5:5
5 For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Those are the words from verse 3, summarised in the word “idolater”. The thought is that these have no “inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God”. Children of God have already entered the hidden kingdom. But the earlier quoted Hebrews 12:28 speaks of our “receiving a kingdom that cannot be moved”. That concerns the present. We are namely in the process of receiving an immovable kingdom. That is not the same as entering. Where we now serve the Lord, are faithful to Him, we shall on the basis of proven faithfulness to Him indeed inherit with Him. For if we are children of God (Romans 8:17), we are “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ”.
Hebrews 2:10:
“…in bringing many sons unto glory”. We are therefore in the process of receiving glory. We are in the process of receiving the kingdom.
We do not see that either, just as we could not see that we entered the kingdom. “In the process of receiving” we do not see either. To this day it is an invisible kingdom, but nonetheless we are occupied with it. We are on our way to our appointment as sons, for we shall inherit that kingdom with Him. That is the importance of our practical life as children of God. Nowhere in the Bible does it say that no fornicator will enter the kingdom of God. Once one is born again, one cannot lose that life again. Eternal life is eternal life—namely imperishable life. It concerns the fact that a believer with the described way of life will not be appointed as a “son” (heir). He will not inherit the kingdom. If one “hath any inheritance in the kingdom”, then one inherits the kingdom. Then one is co-responsible for the course of affairs in the kingdom. That responsibility, that glory—for so it is called—one receives on the basis of proven faithfulness. In another word: on the basis of proven faith. On the basis of living out of faith, in submission and dependence upon and in the service of God. Children of God can therefore be fornicators, unclean persons, covetous men, idolaters, though it should not be so. But whether one then also inherits the kingdom is still very much open to question.
1 Corinthians 6:10
10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. They will indeed enter the kingdom of God. I once asked a murderer about that. He said to the Lord Jesus, who hung beside him on a cross: “Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.” Whereupon the Lord said: “Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:42–43).
The man was saved by faith. Without works, for under those circumstances there could be no question of works at all. Whether he has an inheritance in the kingdom I venture to doubt. Those named in this verse will therefore enter the kingdom of God, but not inherit it.
Galatians 5:19–21
19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,
20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife,

seditions, heresies,
21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Paul writes this list—which is never complete—to born-again people. He says: bear in mind, if this is your life, then you will not inherit. You have entered that kingdom, and the intention is that you should bear fruit for God, to receive inheritance on that basis. “Fruit of the Spirit” namely (Galatians 5:22), and those are named immediately afterwards.
Hebrews 6:10
10 For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister. That “your work” can of course never be the work of the natural man. This is work in the category of “good works, which God hath before ordained” (Ephesians 2:10), in which we should walk. Those works He will not forget; the other works, fortunately, He will—even burn them.
1 Peter 1:3–4
3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,
4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,
The purpose of our new birth is “a lively hope”. Hope is future expectation, but if that hope is lively, then it means that that hope fulfils a practical function in our daily existence, in our walk. This hope is even determinative for our practical life, and therefore it is called “a lively hope”. It is future, an inheritance, and that should determine our life since we have been born again. That inheritance is reserved in heaven for us. Or as Paul says elsewhere: “henceforth there is laid up for me” (2 Timothy 4:8)—reserved, it lies ready. That inheritance is kept for us, and we are on our way there.

Ephesians 5:6–7
6 Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.
7 Be not ye therefore partakers with them. Because of the things in verse 5 “cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience”. In practice it makes no difference who they are, for the thought is that there will certainly be judgement upon the works of the natural man. Both the works (the walk) in the flesh of unbelievers and of believers are judged. Of such lives (such a walk) nothing remains. There are many Scripture passages that explain that at length. Therefore it says: “Be not ye therefore partakers with them”. That corresponds to what Romans 12:2 says: “be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind”. We should not join in, but that is precisely one of the most remarkable habits of man. When people have the idea that everyone is going to join in something, they hurry not to be the last. As children of God we should not join in everything. I think we as children of

God do not have that tendency so strongly, otherwise we would not have become children of God, for if we simply joined in with everyone, we would fling the Bible into the corner and not trouble ourselves about the truth. For that usually costs money and, if all is well, our whole life.

Ephesians 5:8–10
8 For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:
9 (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;)
10 Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. In verse 8 it does not say that a believer must be a light, but that he is “light in the Lord”. The thought is namely that “light” stands for the whole New Creation and “darkness” for the whole old creation. Moreover darkness is used as a synonym for the devil. On the other hand light is used to designate God Himself. God is light, and where we are born of God we are therefore lights. God is called “the Father of lights” (James 1:17). Hence the word “light” is used as a synonym for “spirit”, for both terms denote life. Life, light, spirit are to a high degree synonymous concepts. That is so here too, for in verse 9 it in reality says “the fruit of the Light is in all goodness…”. The whole passage of Scripture speaks namely of light in which we should walk or live. We are light and we should not join in the darkness, is the thought. It is figurative language, but nonetheless completely biblical. Because we are light, because we are “in the Lord”, we should also walk as sons of light, children of light. This is such an important truth. We are holy and therefore we should walk as saints. We are children of God and on that ground we should walk as children of God. Some think it should be the other way round—that you must first walk as children of God and then after a time you receive a diploma or something. If you do well, you pass and then you become a child of God once more. You must first pretend to be one and live accordingly, and then perhaps you become one. That is a great misunderstanding. In my Bible a neat cross-reference has been made to Galatians 5:22, where exactly the same things are concerned. Whereby I point out once more that in Galatians 5:19 “the works of the flesh” are set over against “the fruit of the Spirit”. It is a double contrast. In the first place between “flesh” and “Spirit”, and then between “works” and “fruit”. Works cost activity and effort. Fruit arises of itself. It even takes effort to hold it back. “The fruit of the Spirit” is nothing other than “the fruit of the Word of God” in us.
James 1:21
21 Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. As James describes it, concerning “save your souls” it concerns the outworking of the Word of God in our hearts. That also makes Romans 12:2 somewhat clearer. Where it says “renewed in our mind”, that simply comes because we fill our heart, our thoughts, with the Word of God, and out of that we should then walk. Out of that we should understand “what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God”. Out of that we should then live. That is called here in Ephesians 5:10: “proving what is

acceptable unto the Lord”. To imitate the fruit of the Spirit in the sense of: what is the fruit of the Spirit again? Oh yes, we must be loving to one another, for the fruit of the Spirit is love. We must be joyful. And so Christians with a straight face say: I am so joyful that I am a child of God. We have become so joyful, for yes, it must be, and then a smile is put on the face. A great deal of preaching in practice concerns what one should do—namely one should be loving to one another, joyful, have peace, or be content, longsuffering, one should be kind, temperate, and so on. The only thing achieved by that is that people start pretending. For it is expected of them. Then one plays a role. That fruit of the Spirit, however, does not come from the flesh. You can pretend, but that does not make it so. Then you get the story of the Pharisees: “whited sepulchres”, beautiful on the outside, but inside it is nothing but death (Matthew 23:27). Those Pharisees pretended too, but of children of God it is expected that they let their hearts be filled with the Word of God—that is, with the Light—so that subsequently that Word of God, that Word of the New Covenant, should determine their thoughts and decisions. Through the Word of God in us the divine nature develops in us and that will bear fruit. It is only our own responsibility to fill ourselves with that Word. Even if you pray for three weeks that the Lord would fill your heart with His Spirit, that will not help. We ourselves have the responsibility to do that, for the Lord in that connection prays precisely to us and says: “be filled with the Spirit” (verse 18). It does not depend on Him.

Ephesians 5:11–13
11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.
12 For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.
13 But all things that are reproved are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light. “Have no fellowship with” is the same as “be not ye therefore partakers with them” from verse 7. We know whether something concerns “the unfruitful works of darkness” because we live in the light of that Word of God. Thereby those things are made manifest. Then it becomes clear what the devil is occupied with. In particular with infiltration into the heart of man in general and especially of the believer, to divert him from the Word of God. So that His Word should have no effect. He is the greatest theologian of all ages, so you see that theology is a dangerous subject. Sorry, but I mean it one hundred per cent. It is simply so. In such things, in philosophy, the activity of the devil comes to expression. The whole idea that all people are equal is a completely unbiblical thought. It comes straight from the devil, for it paralyses every activity of man. Everything then no longer matters, for we are all equal anyway and have equal rights. The next step is: and all will be saved anyway. That is then called “universal reconciliation”. That is roughly how it is, but I prefer not to go too deeply into “the works of darkness”. The point is that we should not know what is wrong for us, but rather know what is good for us. In the light of the Word of God we naturally recognise—prove—what those works of darkness might be. For

they are, exactly as it says here, “reproved by the light”. In the Light they are recognised as such and disappear of themselves. At a Bible school there was a meeting of teachers, and they thought the students should be taught more about Mohammedanism and Buddhism and so on. Someone said: what do our young people really know about Mohammedanism? Then my uncle Jo stood up and said: “fortunately nothing”. What good is it to know all sorts of lies and what is not true? What do you gain by that? You must know what the Truth is. In the light of the Truth a lie is immediately recognised; that is no problem at all. You do not need to know all that beforehand. If you have to study lies, I once asked a philosopher, then you immediately have a great many. There is no such thing as the lie. The number of lies, deviations from the truth, is by definition infinite. For there is only one Truth over against the many lies, though the Bible also reduces the lies to one—namely reasoning God away. If you have to study lies, you never come to knowledge of the Truth. If you know the Truth, are convinced of it, then no one can do anything to you any more. One should not read the word “reprove” in verse 11 in the usual modern English meaning of the term. The intention is namely not that these “works of darkness” should be fought against. We should only recognise them as such. The word “reprove”, in the sense of “punish”, we do not find in the Bible at all. What it does mean is not so difficult. It says “reproved by the light”, with the immediate explanation “for whatsoever doth make manifest is light”. “Reprove” means nothing other than “make manifest”, in this case of things that cannot bear the light of day. The thought here is therefore that we should not do these unfruitful works of darkness. We should have no fellowship with them, but rather “reprove” them. That does not mean fight against, persecute, or take punitive measures. It simply means “bring to light”. Nothing more, for we have never been given the commission to fight against any sin except one: the sin of unbelief.

Hebrews 12:3–4

3 For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

4 Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin;

What did the sin of these sinners consist of? Of “contradiction”. Speaking against the Word of God, of course. Faith is accepting the Word of God as it is, and unbelief is rejecting the Word of God. That is called contradiction, and those who do it are here called sinners. All people are sinners, but here the term is used specifically for that one sin of unbelief. Against that we should strive. Then I must note that the concept of “striving” is explained, for it is only in the second place called striving. In the first place it is called “resisting”. That is the striving that only aims to remain standing oneself. Out of self-protection. It is not an attacking but a defensive struggle. We shall come to that later in Ephesians 6. Christian work does not in the first place consist in fighting against sins, but in preaching the gospel. Fighting against sins is fighting against an old creation. Preaching the gospel is making known a New Creation, so that people should choose for it. And as regards sins in the old world, we should completely ignore them, reckon them dead.

Ephesians 5:14
14 Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. Who is that “he” who says? The answer is: “God”, or the “Spirit”, or the “Light”, for it really was about light. The next sentence is quoted from the Old Testament, and this is again an example that Church truth—for that is what this is about—is drawn from the Old Testament. Everything in Ephesians is drawn from the Old Testament. In this case it is quoted from Isaiah 60, but this quotation in Ephesians is not taken word for word, though I do not know precisely, for if the intention had been to quote it literally, it would be from the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, and I have not consulted that. So we only have the comparison between our many English translations.
Isaiah 60:1
1 Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. “Arise” is in Ephesians 5:14 “awake”. To “arise” means “stand up, dress, and get to work”. It concerns “beginning”. “Arise, shine” is twice the same thing. It means: “come to the light”. One usually sleeps in darkness (1 Thessalonians 5:5–7). So Isaiah says: “Stand in the light, for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee”. Ephesians verse 14 says that this arising and coming to the light means that one should arise from the darkness of death and come to the light—namely life. For light is also life. Light is also the Word, and the Word is life. And all that is again Spirit. It is all synonymous. The Apostle applies the verse exclusively to our days and says: “Arise from the dead”. We should in practical sense come to life, whereby it is afterwards established that Isaiah 60 also concerns arising from death. The Light in Isaiah 60 is the Light of the New Covenant. That is the Light of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is after all the Mediator of the New Covenant (1 Timothy 2:5) and who is also called “the light of the world” (John 8:12). That Light is called in Isaiah 60: “the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee”. The glory of Jehovah therefore. When the Bible says “the glory of the LORD”, that is Christ! And that is how it stands in Ephesians 5 too. And now we suddenly understand why there is no simple cross-reference under verse 14 in Ephesians 5 to Isaiah 60. For the conclusion is that Christ is the same as Jehovah. But that does not fit with the general views on the Trinity. So one does not venture there. So no text reference, then one cannot stumble over that either. But nonetheless it is completely biblical that Christ is indeed Jehovah. I asked Peter about that, who simply said it on the day of Pentecost.
Acts 2:36
36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Christ is the Lord, and the Lord is Christ. In Isaiah it is said many times who the Saviour is. Who do we know as the Saviour? Christ, but it repeatedly says “I am the LORD (Jehovah), thy God, the Holy One of Israel” (Isaiah 43:3). He is really completely the same. I shall not explain it further now, but simply state it. Jehovah was humbled. He namely became man. Then He suffered and died, but afterwards He arose from the dead,

and on that occasion He was appointed as Christ, and also and again as Lord or LORD. He laid aside His Godhead to “put it on” again at His resurrection.

Ephesians 5:15–17
15 See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,
16 Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.
17 Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. “Circumspectly” presupposes “caution”. One should namely look ahead. For we have light, so we can see ahead, walk with foresight. “Fools” are in darkness, and “wise” are those who are enlightened. And that shows itself in “redeeming the time, because the days are evil”. When we want to use time, that in practice always comes at the cost of part of our life, but preferably of our whole life. When we want to use that for carrying out His acceptable will (verse 10), thus to serve Him or to “bear fruit unto God”, we shall have to withdraw ourselves from this world for that purpose. The “days are evil”, but we are withdrawn from them, if at least we agree to that. Whatever it costs us, that is “redeeming”, we should place ourselves at the Lord’s disposal, is the thought. Then we are “not unwise”, but “understanding what the will of the Lord is”. How one should do that, how one should understand that will of the Lord, is said in the following verse.

Ephesians 5:18
18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;
This verse has suffered rather a lot from half-reading the verse—namely “be not drunk with wine”. Then people say: the Bible says you must not get drunk. Then I always think: what else should I get drunk on? Beer or something else? But how do you read such a verse? Actually it says that one should get drunk on wine. Yes indeed. For wine is, certainly in this verse, a type of the Spirit. That one should get drunk on, pictured in wine.
Proverbs 31:6
6 Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts. Give wine, strong drink, to him who is perishing, in the hope that he forgets his misery. That is simply typology. Give wine—that is eternal New Life. Give that to those who have lost their way, for “perishing” means “having lost the way”. Walking, being on the way, but not knowing where to. What man needs is New Life, and if we then walk in that Light and in that Life, we forget our misery. Then it no longer dominates us. Therefore it is a fairly biblical given that people in trouble reach for “the bottle”. It is not to be recommended, for it does not solve the problems, but it is a biblical given, because strong drink is a picture of life under the New Covenant. When people then say: if people are drunk you can do nothing more with them, then I say yes, that is exactly the intention. The intention is not that the world should have anything from us. We are not there to contribute a little to the world. We have nothing to do with that; we have been withdrawn from it. You know where you can find the truth? With children and drunk people. If you want to hear the

truth from someone, you must first get him drunk. That costs something, of course. Strong drink promotes the truth, and that is exactly what it is about. Wine throughout the whole Bible is a picture of the Word of God, which is indeed often misused. The Bible is not against strong drink, but the Bible is against misuse in general, and therefore also of wine.
Mark 14:23–25
23 And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it.
24 And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many.
25 Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God. The Lord Jesus taught that wine is a type of the blood, the life, of the New Covenant. He says: “Drink ye all of it” (Matthew 26:27). When they had done that, it took fifty days, and then the whole world thought those people had become drunk. On the day of Pentecost they were in practice “filled with the Spirit”, in the sense that the Spirit worked directly through them. “Filled” means completely 100 per cent full. Personally I have the idea that this does not happen in practice. For there is so much else in us that is also necessary, that it is actually not possible to be completely and exclusively filled with the Word of God. The exception is that on occasion it can happen that we forget everything, lose everything, to be occupied with that one thing. But that is incidental. As on the day of Pentecost. The disciples received the Holy Spirit on Easter day. “The Lord breathed on them and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost” (John 20:22). Moreover “receiving the Holy Ghost” is the same as “being born again”, and that is on the basis of the resurrection of Christ and not on the basis of Pentecost. Pentecost is not so much that the disciples received the Spirit, but that they were filled with the Spirit. They began to speak as the Spirit gave them utterance. That is an incidental event. And so they began to speak, for if the Spirit does something, then it is indeed speaking (Acts 2:4). If the Spirit works in us, then it comes in the first place to expression through the mouth, the throat, the tongue, the lips. And therefore we should be filled with that, just as the disciples on the day of Pentecost. They were filled therewith and began to speak as the Spirit gave them utterance. What was the public’s comment? Acts 2:13: “Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine”. That is surely beautiful symbolism! Then Peter said in verse 15: “For these are not drunken, as ye suppose; seeing it is but the third hour of the day”. But how do you find that? “Arise, shine” (Isaiah 60:1). That always happened early. Wine is therefore a picture of the Spirit, and with that we should be filled. It is our commission. The responsibility for that lies with us. Immediately it is said what the result will be: speaking namely. It is figurative language, but nonetheless it is a good description, because the Spirit after all brings forth Word, Truth, and Light. Where we are filled, even filled with the Spirit, we shall speak. Not in “tongues”, as some think, but:

Ephesians 5:19
19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;
Not so much that we should immediately sing, though of course that is a very good custom. But moreover it also concerns in particular the content of those psalms, hymns, spiritual songs. In the Psalms it is always about the honour of God. That we should seek, with the tongue and also with the whole body. In Colossians Paul says it thus:
Colossians 3:16
16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. Ephesians says: “speaking to yourselves”, and here it is “teaching and admonishing one another”. It is not only speaking; it is teaching and admonishing. It has to do with our fellowship as children of God. That is also expressed in singing together. Singing together has the purpose of giving expression to our unity, and the greatest unity that exists is that different people say exactly the same thing. For that we all get a little book with the same text in it, so that we all sing the same thing, preferably in the same key. Melody and harmony arise when simultaneously from different throats the same things are said. From all mouths the same text can only be if the same text is in all hearts —namely the Word of God. And so both Scripture passages are summarised. We shall fill ourselves with the Word of God, and when we begin to speak we say the same things. Here expressed as “singing, psalms, hymns, spiritual songs”. Nonetheless it is called “speaking” or even “teaching and admonishing”, but to a high degree on a spiritual level.

Ephesians 5:20
20 Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;
The first expression of “being filled with the Spirit” (verse 18) is that one thanks God “always for all things” and therefore lives out of the grace of God. It means in the first place that one is conscious of who and what one has become in Christ, or what one has received from God—namely everything. We were guilty of death; we were by nature men and in that position dead through trespasses and sins (Romans 5). Insofar as we nonetheless exist, even in our old nature, that is thanks to God, who is longsuffering. That applies just as much to your unbelieving neighbour. That he lives, in whatever circumstances, he owes to God. To the longsuffering of God, to the grace of God, certainly in our dispensation of grace. Such a person does not know that, but we are expected to know it. Therefore one thanks God in everything. Not only for spiritual things, but just as much for the material things that have become our portion. We had no right to them; nonetheless we have them, and therefore we thank God. This is the most obvious way to give honour to God. We receive the Spirit to know what has been given us from God, and for that we should thank Him. God the Father namely, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For God the Father works through the Lord Jesus Christ, “who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3).

Ephesians 5:21
21 Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. This verse is in fact the heading for what now follows. That comes after we have in the first twenty verses been fixed on the thought that we should be “followers of God”, and submissive to Him, or to Christ, but also “submitting yourselves one to another”. The thought is certainly not that everyone should be submissive to everyone. That is not how it works in an army either. If that were so, no war would ever be won. The thought is rather this: “in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves” (Philippians 2:3). It concerns there being a hierarchy. Imagine parents being submissive to children. What do you think would become of such a household? And of those children? Nothing, therefore. The next question is then: to whom shall we then be submissive? That comes up in the following verses, beginning with the wives and covering verses 22–33.

Ephesians 5:22
22 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord;
This passage of Scripture forms part of the exposition from the beginning of chapter 4 through to 6, in which the practice of the life of a child of God is spoken of with regard to a kind of hierarchy.
“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands”.
“Children, obey your parents”.
“Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh”.
Though we as children of God are fundamentally equal, that does not alter the fact that, as long as we are still in the flesh, we do indeed bear social and societal responsibility. That begins as close as possible to ourselves—namely with the most obvious relationship that exists in human life. That is marriage, after which it says “wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands”. I shall not go into it at length again, for I did that last time, but unfortunately the recording did not work then. Doing the same thing a second time I cannot manage. First a little of what does not stand: “wives, be obedient to your own husbands”. We might perhaps expect that, because in points 2 and 3 it is indeed mentioned, and because it is certainly the most obvious meaning of “submit”. It does not say “be obedient”, but “submit”. That is in a certain sense a slightly weaker expression. Submission points to the position one occupies, with all its consequences. That “be obedient” is not said is because it also applies to married women that they should be more obedient to the Lord than to their own husband. But the woman being as obedient as possible to the man is “according to the will of the Lord”. That is the normal course of affairs. Then the men come in turn, but that is simply how the story begins. The apostle Paul gives guidelines here concerning the relationship of husband and wife within marriage, but in practice it speaks even more about the relationship between Christ and the Church. There are those who say: Paul did not know much about marriage. I am however of the

opinion that the Apostle did indeed know from the inside, from his own experience, what marriage is. That was evidently before his conversion. I have good arguments for that, drawn at least from the first epistle to the Corinthians and from Jewish practice. One cannot namely be a Pharisee and a member of the Council without being married. That has always been so. I find that a strong argument. From the Apostle's words in the first epistle to the Corinthians it also appears. He does not say it in so many words, but he does say it. It is at least implied. Many think the apostle Paul was always unmarried. I do not believe that at all. I believe the man was married, became a widower early, and left it at that. For the sake of his service to the Lord. The relationship between Christ and the Church is set as an example for the relationship between husband and wife. Beginning with submission, and that is exactly how man, the believing man, should be submissive to human authority. The same word is used in Romans 13, whereby it is also established that one should be more obedient to the Lord than to man or authority. In practice it appears that someone who is submissive to authority must sometimes be disobedient to the authority for the Lord's sake. So it can also happen that the wife must be disobedient to her husband for the Lord's sake. But on the other hand, it is the Lord Himself who assigns the believing wife this position. We therefore cannot bargain over the fact that the believing wife should be submissive to the Lord. A wife who says: I am willing to serve the Lord, but not my husband—that cannot be. The first way in which the wife serves the Lord is by serving her husband. That is rule 1. Then we see further. The believing wife who refuses to be submissive to her husband refuses therefore to be submissive to the Lord. That is simply how it is. There is nothing to bargain over; that is also what stands here. I simply share that now…

Ephesians 5:23
23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.
In my Bible there is a cross-reference to the first verses of 1 Corinthians 11. The thought is namely that God is the Head of Christ. Christ is the Head of the man, and the man is the head of the wife. That is how it stands there, in that order. Here it is cited in the same way. The thought is not that the relationship between husband and wife in marriage is the norm for the relationship of Christ to the Church. It is the other way round. That is to say that the relationship of Christ to the Church is the norm for the relationship between husband and wife. The ideal for our marriage lies in the relationship between Christ and the Church. That is the standard by which we should live. And once that has been established, it suffices then to speak about Christ and the Church. That is the measure for our own married life, is the idea, and that is brought forward here, right at the end of verse 23: "and he is the saviour of the body". The thought is namely that, as Christ is the Saviour of the Body, then He is the One who maintains the Body. Who cares for the Body. Christ maintains the Church. So the husband will indeed care for his wife. "Provide her with what is necessary"—that is roughly the official legal expression. The wife should

be submissive to the husband, and the husband should then care for the wife. That is the biblical interaction. In our relationship as Church to Christ, we are submissive to Him, and He should provide us with all that is necessary. That concerns our life now, “the time that remains in the flesh” (1 Peter 4:2). Insofar as we serve Him, He will give us what He deems necessary. According to His standard namely. That applies within marriage too. I do not say that if the wife does not serve or is not submissive to the husband, the husband then does not have to care for her. But the chance is great that the husband will then not do it either. It concerns there being a bond, whereby both parties bear a different responsibility towards each other, because husband and wife are after all different. Our responsibility as Church is the same as that of the wife towards her husband. We as Church should be submissive to Christ.

Ephesians 5:24
24 Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. The position of the Church is one of subjection or submission to Christ, and that is taken as an example for the wives towards their own husbands. And there it even says “in every thing”. There is therefore no way to bargain over that. Then it is reasoned from the other side.

Ephesians 5:25
25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;
Here it does not concern the relationship between men and women in general, but the relationship between husband and wife within marriage. What stands here is very difficult, for the simple reason that here two truths are spoken of, directly connected to each other, and usually both are unknown. In the first place: “husbands, love your wives”. The thought is then that it does not go by itself, but that it does indeed cost something. The other thought is that Christ loved the Church and loves her, but that also costs Him something, and that too is usually unknown. The Lord Jesus had to give up one thing and another for the Church. The term used is that of “gave himself”, and also of sacrifice. Not in the sense of dying, but in the sense that He devotes Himself to the Church, at the cost of other things. That example is also held before the husband with regard to his wife. That does not stand here for the first time, for it is drawn from Ephesians 5:2: “…as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us…”.
Christ devotes Himself to the Church, and He does that at the cost of other things that He does not do, but could perhaps do. That concerns namely the revelation of His kingdom, or the revelation of His glory to the nations and to the world in general. Despite His being “far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion” (Ephesians 1:21) in this dispensation, it is still so that the Lord Jesus Christ in the present world, even now after nearly 2000 years, is still the rejected and despised One. He still does not claim His right. Instead He suffers wrong and reproach for the sake of His Church, which He now “saves” with the word from verse

23, before bringing that judgement. After the completion of the Church He will yet bring that judgement upon the living humanity, in order to reveal His glory over the nations and to the nations and to bring His kingdom over the nations. He waits something like 2000 years before doing that. In that time He gathers the Church to Himself. He could have done so much more; that is also His rightful due, but instead He has given Himself for or to the Church. Exactly the same applies to the husband. He could do all sorts of things, but to many things he cannot attend, because he has another responsibility. The husband should limit himself, in the first place for his wife's sake. He should serve her in the first place. Care for her. That costs something, in particular his freedom, for that is what men first cry out.

Ephesians 5:26
26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,
Christ would sanctify that Church. Since "sanctify" is rather a difficult word, it is explained by means of an illustration: "having cleansed it" (as in the ERV translation), for it concerns the present work of Christ, "with the washing of water by the word". Those terms we also encounter in Titus 3.
Titus 3:5
5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;
The work of the Spirit upon us is here described as a washing. That work upon us is a cleansing work, a sanctifying work. Cleansing happens by water, and that is a picture of the Spirit. Titus 2:14 says that "he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people". We set that alongside Ephesians 5 and read not only "a peculiar people" but also "a peculiar wife", or "a peculiar body". Why? So that she might be "zealous of good works". For that purpose Christ cleanses the Church in our days. He does that by the word, for "all scripture is given by inspiration of God… that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16–17). The work of Christ, with which He is occupied, is to cleanse us, to sanctify us, to snatch us from the world as such, or with the words of Galatians 1:4: "that he might deliver us from this present evil world". So that we might be fit for every good work—namely for His service.

Ephesians 5:27
27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. The Church should be without shortcomings in relation to the Lord. What husband would not like to have such a wife? The thought is then: well then, the husband must do something for it. So it is in the relationship between Christ and the Church. Christ, who desires a perfect Church, without spot or wrinkle, does everything for that. What it comes down to is that these are the standards by which we as the Church should

serve the Lord. And then by which the wife should serve the husband, and vice versa. These are the standards by which the husband should give himself up to the wife and love her. That is what this is about, and the apostle draws that conclusion in verse 28 as well.

Ephesians 5:28
28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. ‘So ought’ means “in this manner”, or “thus”, “according to these principles”. This applies to the husband. Then follows an argument against which no one can argue any more. If a man loves himself and his own body, then he should love his wife, for that is best for him. Of course that costs something, but that is simply how the situation is.

Ephesians 5:29
29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:
I find that “cherisheth” a beautiful expression. It has to do with “keeping in subjection” and at the same time with “providing all that is necessary”. In our society the husband is liable to maintain his wife. But just as much liable to “cherish”. That is to say, the wife will stand under him. Where the wife submits herself to the husband, the husband will cherish the wife. The nice thing is that it is one word in English for one and the same relationship, but viewed from two sides at once. In a 375-year-old book I read that “marriage” was then called “holding”. That is to say that it concerns “holding”. “To marry” is completely the same word as “to hold”. It concerns bringing into “a fixed relationship with one another”.

Ephesians 5:30
30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. The relationship between head and body is that of male to female. That is applied to the Lord and His Church. By definition the male stands above the female. I do not mean man and woman, but male and female. For they stand in relation to each other. The woman stands female in relation to the man. The man stands male in relation to the woman. One step up: the man stands female in relation to Christ, and Christ stands male in relation to the man. For the man should serve Christ. He therefore stands in a female, namely subordinate, position. The Church stands female in relation to Christ, and Christ stands male in relation to the Church. One phase higher, which becomes even more difficult: Christ stands female in relation to God, and God stands male in relation to Christ. For Christ is submissive to God. Then someone said: but Christ is God. Then I said: yes, but the Church is Christ. And then Paul said here: husband and wife are one flesh. For of course we speak of a unity. But within that unity there is duality. But that one unity exists precisely because there are at least two parties. Within that unity is the male and the female. In creation it works the same: heaven is male in relation to earth, for earth is by definition “mother earth” and female in relation to heaven. And insofar as the female should bring forth something, that comes because of fellowship

with the male. Then it is one. Creation is one. Judaism has long taught the story that the male spoke with the female of God. The male of God said: I am going to make a creation. The female of God then said: that is good, but then I am coming along. That is the formulation, so I pass it on as such. The thought is that God Himself went with “the woman”—namely with creation—and Himself became part of creation when He was born in the person of the Lord Jesus. And by that way the female was brought into fellowship with the male. In that way creation, the world, was reconciled to God
(2 Corinthians 5:19). In that way fellowship came about, and from that a New Creation is born. Until that happens, we speak of a world that is pregnant. The whole creation is in travail (Romans 8:22). The male and female are two parties that should stand in a prescribed relationship to each other, and that brings forth fruit. I am not only speaking about sexuality and reproduction, but about bringing forth fruit. It should have result, it should mean something. That is so with everything. If the female —the world, creation—stands in the right position and is submissive to the Creator, she is subject, obedient, listens to the Word of God, and thereby will bear fruit. The expression “of his flesh, and of his bones” stands in some manuscripts and in some not. It should therefore not stand. That makes no difference to me, for the expression is drawn from Genesis 2, and there it does stand. That we should make the comparison with the statements from Genesis 2 appears in verse 31.

Ephesians 5:31
31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. Genesis 2:24 says: “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh”. But in verse 23 it already stood: “And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man”. Note what it says: “this is now bone of my bones”. The comparison is not with before, but with after. That is to say, for this one first time this woman was taken from the body of the man. She is the body of the man, and she always was, for that is really what you must say. That is so this time, but later it will no longer be so. This first time from Genesis 2:23 is quoted in Ephesians 5 and thus directly applied to the Church: “For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones” (verse 30).

Ephesians 5:32
32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. The translators inserted words to make it clearer. That is a pity, for it was not necessary at all. They only needed to translate “but I speak” instead of “but I say”. This translation is 350 years old, and perhaps it was good in that time, but it turned out over time that it needed to be different because of changes in the language. I cannot judge that. I read the verse without those italicised words, and instead of “say” I read “speak”, and instead of “concerning” I read “about”. That can be done, as appears when we read things from that time. It is simply really completely the

same. So it becomes: “this is a great mystery, but I speak about Christ and about the church”. It means that this statement from Genesis 2, though made on the occasion of Adam and Eve, is a statement about Christ and the Church. The statements applied to Adam and Eve are in the first place statements about Christ. And through Christ about the Church. When God says “let us make man”, singular, “in our image, after our likeness”, we are expected to know that it is a statement about Christ. Though covered, for it is a mystery. In the New Testament it is openly and plainly said that Jesus Christ is the likeness of God and the express image of His person, the brightness of His glory and the express image of His substance (Hebrews 1). He is the image of God (2 Corinthians 4:4). That only means anything if that is not the case for all other people. If you and I, and whoever else, are bearers of God’s image, what sense does it make to triumphantly say of the Lord Jesus that He is a bearer of God’s image? Stronger still, then it would only be said that He is a man, like anyone else. The point is precisely that He is not a man like anyone else. The statements in Genesis are statements about Christ; only what comes first is Adam, of whom it is only said in the New Testament that “he is the figure of him that was to come” (Romans 5:14). So a type, a foreshadowing of Christ. Also the history of how Eve was taken from the body of Adam (Genesis 2:22) has a prophetic meaning and ultimately in the highest instance concerns the Church. Christ and the Church are indeed one flesh, and that is therefore the norm. The highest ideal for the believing husband and wife. So in Genesis 2 the Church is already spoken of. Actually already in Genesis 1, on the occasion of the creation of Adam, for Eve was in Adam.

Ephesians 5:33
33 Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband. The Apostle returns to everyday life and applies it to “every one of you in particular”. That is to one’s own blessing, to one’s own glory. Paul does not need to dwell at length on your or my married life, but rather on the real relationship between Christ and the Church. We do not live under law, but we do seek reasonably fixed standards—how the Lord would most like to see it. That is a whole phase higher. We find that here.

Ephesians 6:1–4
1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.
2 Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;)
3 That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.
4 And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Where we wish to serve God, that will in the first place happen in our ordinary life, in which we are married, perhaps have children, and have also been children. Probably we are “servants according to the flesh” and perhaps otherwise “masters according to the flesh”. It therefore indeed concerns matters we are not inclined to classify as spiritual, but nonetheless they are. They are also

matters we do not simply place in the category of service to God. And yet they are that, and even in the first place. That is simply where it begins. The idea is simply that the change in our thinking should in the first place come to expression in our ordinary daily life. For each one of us these statements apply in some way. The intention is even that first the normal human things should be in order before one is perhaps sufficiently equipped to serve the Lord also in another field. In that connection the children are now addressed from 6:1–3. The apostle Paul therefore includes the children. He also has a message for them. Children are children because they do not bear their own responsibility. They fall under the responsibility of the parents. They are identified with the parents. Where the parents form part of the Church, the children, as long as they are children, are also reckoned with them. They are even written to here, and it is assumed that they are children in the Lord. In whatever way. It may be assumed that children of believing parents are sensitive to these arguments. Such as: “obey your parents in the Lord”. And when it says “for this is right”, that is not only right in the world as such, but right in the eyes of the Lord. That this is so may appear from the addition: “Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise)”. So that these statements are immediately connected with the Word of God as such. And in this case even with the Law. Which naturally implies that this statement from the Law, including the promise formulated in verse 3: “that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth”, is therefore in some way still applicable. I at any rate draw the conclusion that when children of believing parents are obedient to their parents, this is beneficial for their health. Verse 4 also still concerns the children, but there their fathers are addressed. They are indeed the bearers of authority, but in that position it is not the intention that they should “provoke [their] children to wrath”, which evidently can happen quite easily. If that is the case, you can forget about upbringing, for that rests in particular on respect. We know that from teaching too. One teacher gains that respect and the other does not. There are therefore limits to what a father can do in practice in the position of educator. “Bring them up” is drawn from 5:29. It concerns the care of that “own flesh”. That can only be through “the nurture and admonition of the Lord”. Thereby children are offered what is necessary in the instruction of life. In that way they learn something about simple social relationships. For example as employee, employer, or freeman, on which biblical principles apply just as much.

Ephesians 6:5–9
5 Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ;
6 Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;
7 With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men:
8 Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.
9 And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening:

knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him. The servants (employees) are extensively exhorted before what is done rather more briefly with “masters according to the flesh” (employers). For those employers render account to their “own Master in heaven”. God does not look at the outward appearance (of persons) but looks at the heart (1 Samuel 16:7), in this case of the “masters according to the flesh”. The employers should be conscious of that in dealing with personnel who in one way or another work for them. In particular it is said: “forbearing threatening”. The “master according to the flesh” should also in that connection reckon with the position before his “own Master in heaven”. Verses 5–9 therefore also concern responsibilities, hierarchy, and being conscious (fear and trembling) of the position in which we are placed in daily life. Thereby it is said that everything we do, therefore also as employee or employer, or “whether he be bond or free”, we should do for the Lord. “Doing the will of God from the heart”. Out of the heart. For we are “servants of Christ”. And that in humility, “in singleness of your heart”, after the example of Christ. The Lord will reward us for that, though we do not know when that will be, but it will happen, it says here. Therefore we should be: “with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men”. From practice I have the impression that personnel are often not conscious that the well-being of their masters, the well-being of the boss, also serves their own well-being. If things go well with the business, things can also go well with the personnel. One should consider both sides. Thereby we should bear in mind that whoever we are here on earth, justice will ultimately be done to us in heaven. That means possibly that you can suffer injustice your whole life. We children of God should “expect it”—that is for the Flemings among you—we should reckon that we shall suffer injustice in our life. Our Lord, whom we serve, suffered injustice here in this life. He placed His expectation on the justice that would be brought about in the resurrection. Hebrews 12:2: “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God”. Where we are followers of Christ, we cannot expect more than our Lord could expect. We are servants and therefore no more than our Lord. It teaches us to place trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and to look for the glory that shall be revealed (Romans 8:18).

Ephesians 6:10

10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. From this verse we come to another field. In a certain sense it is the same, for even now it indeed concerns the practical walk of life of believers. But no longer so much merely on the earthly level. Here we come to the spiritual level, and through the little word “finally” it is pointed out that what now follows is the direct consequence—more or less as a matter of course—of what has gone before. That is at least the part from chapter 4:1, where the practical application begins, following on the doctrinal exposition in chapters 1 through 3. In this last part of the Epistle to the Ephesians the apostle Paul speaks about the spiritual warfare we

should reckon with. That is not a warfare we should seek. It is however a warfare for which we should be strong: “be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might”. There are two further words for “strength”—namely “power” and “might”. In chapter 1:19 we already encountered those same terms, plus the term “working”. Those four words denote the same thing. Naturally there is some difference between those words, but in the first place it does not concern the difference, but the agreement. In this way great emphasis is laid on the subject. In Ephesians 1 that is “the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ”. That power is in Christ (verse 20).

Ephesians 6:11–12
11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.
12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. This spiritual warfare we have is not “against flesh and blood” and therefore does not play out merely on the earthly level, on the level of the visible, for that is what “flesh and blood” stands for here. It is a warfare against “principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world”. That warfare arises when we live according to the exposition in the preceding chapters. Then we in fact withdraw ourselves from the world as such and therefore from “the rulers of the darkness of this world”, from “spiritual wickedness in high places”. For then we place ourselves under the dominion, under the leadership, of the Spirit, or of Christ. The present world is ruled by the devil, “the prince of the power of the air” (Ephesians 2:2) and thereby by his personnel, whatever that may consist of. Many are conscious that we have a warfare against Satan and his personnel. Not against “flesh and blood”, but against “principalities and powers”, and so they go in search of where those principalities and powers are, to fight against them afterwards, for example by casting them out. That must then be done by prayer and fasting; there seems to be a Bible text for something similar, but that is not how it is. We should submit ourselves to God and take no notice of the rest, then we are immune to “the fiery darts of the wicked” (verse 16). Those are in any case spiritual powers. Whoever simply lives in this world, according to the principles and laws of the old creation, according to the rules of “the god of this world” (2 Corinthians 4:4), has no warfare with those powers. There is then no occasion for it. Where we acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ as our Lord and Head and seek to serve Him, we suddenly have to do with His adversary. Who then also becomes our adversary. That sounds alarming, but it should not be in the light of Ephesians 1.
Ephesians 1:19–23
19 And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,
20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,

21 Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:
22 And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,
23 Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all. This of course remains simply true. Our position is in Christ, but nonetheless that warfare is there. The point, however, is that fundamentally this warfare has already been decided, for that is really the story behind it. For that warfare has in fact long been decided by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, for He has definitively overcome the adversary.
Colossians 2:15
15 And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it. That warfare has in fact already been fought by the Lord Jesus Himself. If we have a share in the Lord Jesus Christ—being in Him—then we have in Him also the same victory over these principalities and powers. Romans 8 says: “Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him…”. It presupposes that there is warfare, for if there were no warfare, one could also not be a conqueror. We are vulnerable with regard to the devil if we are not “strong in the Lord”. Becoming strong we do by putting on the whole armour of God. Only by the strength of the Lord can we stand; “that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil”. Then we resist. Those wiles are often very subtle. We do not always immediately see through them. It is however good that we realise these things and know that we have a very powerful enemy. And therefore:

Ephesians 6:13
13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. The expression “the evil” we encounter in Matthew 6. In the “Our Father”: “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil”. And so we immediately have two terms to designate this adversary. He is the tempter, for God tempts no one (James 1:13). “From evil” (Matthew 5:37) means “from Satan”; it comes from him. The Lord Jesus experienced that during the temptation by the evil one in the wilderness. Through the Word of God—“it is written”—the Lord Jesus stood firm (Matthew 4:1–11). “In the evil day” means that under certain circumstances, at certain times, the devil ventures his attack. For he “walketh about, as a roaring lion… seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8). One of the commentaries on the term “the evil day” is that it is always the evil day, for that already stood in Ephesians 5:16: “redeeming the time, because the days are evil”. “The evil day” is then the time ruled by the evil one, and that is the devil. So all days are evil, but partly because of the context, I hold to the view that the evil day is the day, the time, in which that roaring lion suddenly strikes. Afterwards the temptation disappears, to return later. That comes in waves. “The evil day” concerns periods in which one should precisely then, through the Word of God, stand firm. Figuratively we put on armour. That in practice turns out to consist of clothing. In these verses 22–24 of

chapter 4 it concerns putting off, taking off, the old man and putting on the new man, and that is here in verses 11 and 13 the putting on, or taking up, “the whole armour of God”. We should put on the new man, and that is “the Lord” from verse 10. He is our armour. William of Orange once said, through the mouth of Marnix van St Aldegonde: “My shield and trust art Thou, O God my Lord; on Thee so will I build.” From this it appears that the shield is a foundation. The Lord is the foundation. The Lord stands on that foundation, and we should do so too. In the last verses of Romans 13 you find these Church truths again.

Romans 13:11–14

11 And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.

12 The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.

13 Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.

14 But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof. The thought is that the New Covenant has dawned, that it has become light, that the sun has risen. Salvation has come much nearer. Isaiah 60:1: “Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee”.

Ephesians 5:14: “Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light”. Ephesians 5 continues with: “be filled with the Spirit” and then comes the story of putting on the whole armour. In Romans 13 that is “put on the armour of light” and in Ephesians 5:9 “the fruit of the light”. In the KJV you do not find it back, but in the original text you do. In Romans it is hardly spoken of the warfare into which believers would come, but through that word “armour” it comes up. Normally it should have said “put on the garment of light” or something. Or: “put on the new man”, but it says “armour of light”. The armour with which one should step into the light. Armour serves for only one thing—namely for warfare. From the comparison with Ephesians 5 and 6 that seems clear enough to me. “Putting on the armour of light” corresponds with “put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ”. Followed by: “and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof”. For that belongs to the old man, and as long as we orient ourselves on the flesh, as if that is the most important in our life, we are very vulnerable to the devil. He will then prevent us from serving God. When we are “clothed with Christ” we are invulnerable.

Matthew 14:28–32

28 And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.

29 And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.

30 But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.

31 And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?

32 And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased. Where in our life we look at circumstances, apply human standards, measure our own

life—and that of others—by human principles, then we absolutely go under and become unusable for the Lord. That is what the devil wants to achieve. The picture of the armour is drawn from the Old Testament scriptures; in particular from Isaiah 59, where it says that truth is lacking, for men lie against the LORD. There are even many transgressions. The LORD saw the pitiable state of the world in general, and of Israel in particular, and does something about it.
Isaiah 59:15–17
15 Yea, truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey: and the LORD saw it, and it displeased him that there was no judgment.
16 And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him.
17 For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloke. The Lord gave up His original position in heaven and humbled Himself when He became Man. That is what this is about. Christ as the High Priest of the New Covenant (“intercessor”) brings “salvation”. Christ first puts on that armour. In the New Testament He is meanwhile that armour.
2 Corinthians 10:3–4
3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:
4 (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)We still always have to do with the old man. Our walk is in the flesh, with all its shortcomings, but insofar as we serve the Lord and thereby also come into this warfare and have to do with this adversary, we should be conscious that that warfare is not waged after the flesh. That is to say, it is not waged through fleshly reasonings. It is not waged according to the insight we have by nature. That is the contradiction in our life that we continually have to deal with. We are in the flesh, but that does not alter the fact that we should walk according to the Spirit. That stands in many places. We should not judge our life by human norms, or submit to our so-called fleshly understanding, but realise that we as children of God have received another life, New Life in Christ, in us. That Spirit has its own method and plans, which completely withdraw from our natural reasonings (2 Corinthians 10:5). Therefore we as believers should unlearn arranging our life according to the principles perhaps used in general society. Believers should be fully conscious that they should be led by the Holy Spirit and that we should be faithful to biblical principles. Then “righteousness”. We should submit to God’s right. That includes that we do not stand under the law, but have been placed in liberty and bear responsibility for our service to the Lord. That is righteousness. We serve righteousness and we serve grace, says Romans 6, and we should continue to do that. “Righteousness”, which is the same as “righteousness”, has been revealed apart from the law.
Romans 3:21–22
21 But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;

22 Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:
That is the righteousness we should put on as a breastplate. It is not our own righteousness, but God’s righteousness, which is by faith of Jesus Christ. We put that on by believing, by trusting, by submitting to what God says in His Word. That is how we stand. Then the “helmet of salvation”. Salvation is deliverance, and the helmet protects the head, the thinking. We should have our mind protected by the certainty of salvation. We know we are saved, we know we have eternal life, we know we are children of God. That certainty protects our thinking against the attacks of doubt, fear, or despair that the enemy brings. Then the “sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God”. That is our only offensive weapon. The Word of God is what we use to fight back. It is living and powerful, sharper than any twoedged sword (Hebrews 4:12). When the devil attacks with his lies, we answer with “it is written”. That is how the Lord Jesus stood in the wilderness. That is how we stand. The whole armour is Christ Himself. We put on the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 13:14). He is our truth, our righteousness, our peace, our faith, our salvation, our sword. When we are clothed with Him, we are invulnerable.

Ephesians 6:14–17
14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;
15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;
16 Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.
17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:
Stand therefore. That is the command. Having done all, to stand. We do not fight for victory; we stand in the victory already won by Christ. The battle is the Lord’s. Our part is to stand firm, fully equipped with Him. In the evil day—the day when the attack comes—we withstand. We do not run, we do not advance in our own strength, we stand. And having stood, we continue to stand. That is the Christian warfare: not striving in the flesh, but standing in the Spirit, clothed with Christ, armed with His truth. The enemy is defeated. The armour is Christ. Stand therefore.
Romans 6:13
13 Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. Because this concerns our practical walk of life, we come to Romans 6. There it appears that by nature we served sin, but now that we have received a new nature, we should no longer serve sin but the opposite—namely righteousness. Submit ourselves to that. When we are baptised in water, we are expected thereby to justify God. Then we agree with God’s right and accept that we live under it. That is of fundamental importance for our practical life of faith. Then we know where we stand—namely in grace, in righteousness therefore.
Romans 5:2 :

“By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” Our bodily members, and thereby our bodies, we should present as instruments of righteousness. We should learn righteousness. If we do not do that, we more or less automatically place ourselves under the law, and that is a “ministration of death” (2 Corinthians 3:7). The law is wielded by the devil. We learn that already in Genesis 2, where it speaks of “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil”. The devil wants Adam and Eve to eat of that tree, whereas God had emphatically said that this was the one tree of which they must not eat. “Having on the breastplate of righteousness” means that we should live under the New Covenant. Then the “gospel”. We should hold to that “gospel of peace”. Just as with “faith” and “the word of God”. The thought is that we should be ready—prepared, available—to make known that “gospel of peace”. Feet are also mentioned in connection with that. Sometimes one must go out the door for that. That is a completely biblical thought and belongs to the nature of our dispensation. The gospel was brought to us in that way. It came from Jerusalem. Romans 10:13–15
13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.
14 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?
15 And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!
The quotation comes from Isaiah 52:7. There it says “of him”. If it is singular, then it concerns the Lord Himself, and if plural, then it concerns those sent by the Lord. The gospel should be brought from Jerusalem, and even outside Israel therefore, to the Gentiles. To the far countries, the “isles of the sea”. The idea is that those feet must after all take the mouth somewhere. Our feet should therefore, figuratively speaking, always be “shod”. They must namely always be ready to take us where the gospel, the word of God, should be brought. We should also think thereby of bringing the glad tidings to born-again people. That is what the Apostle himself did. Not everyone is sent. That is also what Romans 10 says. Those who do preach are sent. That is a specific ministry, but the thought is that each one of us should in principle be ready for that. Which therefore means that we all run the risk of having to go out at some point. 1 Peter 3:15
15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:
We should always be ready for the sake of “the gospel of peace”. For the sake of our service under the New Covenant. For that is what it comes down to in practice, for a glad message, gospel, always has to do with the New Covenant. Not only for those who do not know it, but also for those who live under it or should be pointed to it. “The shield of faith” is a movable—active—part of this armour. Characteristic and essential for this spiritual warfare, this spiritual walk, is faith. Faithfulness to the Truth namely. Thus “the shield of faith” becomes the means by which we “shall

be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked". However the adversary works, whatever he does, it is always a matter of faith. Every dart is always parried with faith. It always concerns faithfulness to the Lord. For the adversary is out for our unfaithfulness. That we should no longer serve the Lord or be less faithful. By nature we were subject to the adversary, but we were withdrawn from him. He therefore tries to get us back into line. Where we are 100 per cent devoted to the Word of God, or to Christ, and hold to that, or to Him, nothing can go wrong. But the Lord Himself had already said that when He said:
Matthew 6:33
33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. The apostle Paul repeats that in:
Colossians 3:1
1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Faithfulness to, and faith in, the Word of God is the only way we can gain the victory. That shield, which places us at the highest level, we should therefore take up, as it says in verse 16, to "quench all the fiery darts of the wicked". The "helmet of salvation", in verse 17, we also find in:
1 Thessalonians 5:8
8 But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. "Salvation" is used in the Bible for everything good that God gives, will give, or has already given. Our new birth, that we have become children of God, is seen as salvation. That also applies to the reward, "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you"
(1 Peter 1:4). Hence Philippians 2:12 can say: "…work out your own salvation with fear and trembling". If one sees salvation there merely as being born again, then the verse does not fit. One cannot bring about one's own new birth. But one does have it in one's own hand whether or not one will receive that inheritance. It is called here "the hope of salvation", for with the concept of "salvation" it does not concern the present but the future. The salvation we shall receive in the future. It concerns the reward we shall ultimately receive. Where we remain faithful to the Lord in the warfare, we shall receive from the Lord "the crown of righteousness". "Take the helmet of salvation" means: direct your thoughts to the future. To the expectation—the hope—that we have from the Lord. With a helmet we should think in particular of protection, not only for the head but also for the face. When one wears such a thing, the eyes are also protected. At the same time the field of vision is limited. One can no longer look properly around. One can only look forward now, and of course that is the intention. Hebrews 11:1 and Hebrews 10:38
Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.
Hebrews 10:38 Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. Faith is the firm foundation for the things one does not yet see but certainly in the future. "The just" is faithful to the Lord and lives his practical life out of this faith and this

hope. God speaks about the future. He knows and reveals the future (Isaiah 45). Only the one true God can announce the future beforehand. He actually does so, and if one therefore believes in the Words of God, one believes in what God has spoken about future things. Faith and hope therefore belong together. They are not the same, but in biblical practice they are synonymous. No faith without hope, and we have hope because of faith—namely trust in the Word of God, especially concerning our future expectation. Many believers unfortunately have no real future expectation. They do not want to hear anything about that themselves. They say: well, we shall see. They prefer not to look to the future, because they are afraid it will disappoint, and that comes in large part from ignorance. But at the same time from unbelief. One does not trust God on His Word and does not even take the trouble to inform oneself of it. And so one has no expectation of the coming of Christ, of “the rapture of the Church”, of glory that shall be revealed, and of many other things. Where we are conscious of our future, that has an effect on our life. It is not for nothing that Peter says:
1 Peter 1:3–9
3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,
4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,
5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.
6 Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:
7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:
8 Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:
9 Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. “A lively hope” means a hope that determines every day of our life. That is also one of the great differences between believers and unbelievers, or between believers who do not live out of faith. Their life is to a high degree determined by the past. By how everything has come about. Whereas the life of those who live out of faith and hope is determined by the future. Philippians 3:14
14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. An unbelieving man cannot say that, for he does not know the future. Insofar as he says he does, I do not take him seriously. We live in a society that with rapid pace rushes towards the future. Everything that was must especially be changed. We are indeed “on our way to tomorrow”, but do not know what tomorrow will bring. What foolishness that is. I cannot understand those things, and they call that conservative… That is not what I am; I simply claim that we know the future because God has spoken to us about future things. God has made promises to us about things not yet seen, and we believe in that. We reach out to that, and that

is a Christian principle of life. I am of the opinion that where we serve the Lord, we have interest in the future and therefore in the prophetic Word (2 Peter 1:19). That only makes sense if we are ready to devote our present life to Him. I am firmly convinced that where so many believers place themselves in greater or lesser degree under the law, that automatically results in having no interest in the prophetic Word. Verse 17 concludes with “the sword of the Spirit”. Those spiritual powers can only be fought in a spiritual way and only by the Spirit of Christ—namely the Holy Spirit. That Spirit has brought forth the Bible. Of that “sword of the Spirit” we should avail ourselves. What that “spiritual sword”—for that is what it comes down to—is, stands directly afterwards. That is namely the word of God. That is therefore the most dynamic, the most movable, part of this whole armour. It is not an attacking weapon but a defensive weapon, for these verses are still about defence against “the wiles of the devil” (verse 11). This “sword of the Spirit” is used to ward off blows from the sword of the adversary. The word of God, Truth, should after all be used against the word of the adversary, “the liar from the beginning” (John 8:44). The Lord Jesus used this sword in His defence against the devil when He said four times in succession: “It is written” (Matthew 4:1–11). The sword is also mentioned in Hebrews.

Hebrews 4:11–12

11 Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.

12 For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. “The same example of unbelief” concerns unbelief. In this case in the history of Israel, where we know that the law works unbelief. We should not fall into that example, but “labour… to enter into that rest”. Naturally through faith in the Word of God, which because of the singular is regarded as one whole. One should have respect for the Word of God, for the Scripture. I do not really find that back in the “confessional writings”. In practice those are often handled with much greater respect than the Bible itself. And unbelief is rejecting the Word of God. We should therefore never use the concept of faith to designate religion. That is done all the time, even among Christians. As though: one has his faith this way and the other that way. That is not faith; that is unbelief! In that case one had better say: One has his unbelief this way and the other that way. For it is after all rejection of the Word of God. One does that in completely different ways, and so there is a difference between one unbelief and another unbelief. The Word of God, “sharper than any twoedged sword”, dissects things into “parts” and therefore into “divisions”. The Word of God makes distinction because we do not know or cannot make the distinction ourselves. Making distinction is important to be able to distinguish things. We then see that the one is not the same as the other. We learn to understand differences. “That ye may approve things that are excellent” (Philippians 1:10), says Paul. The sword is named here, but what is described is the dissecting knife, the scalpel, to be able to distinguish things. We should at any rate learn to understand

the distinction between spirit and soul, as it also stands here. Whereby in this case “soul” stands for “visible things” and “spirit” for “invisible things”. It concerns at any rate the difference between the old man and the new man. Between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant, for the Epistle to the Hebrews is about that. In the narrower sense “soul” is the “walk” or “the practical life of man”. We should learn to understand the distinction between how someone’s life appears—that is the soul—and how he experiences that. The latter is a spiritual matter. That is invisible. “Experience” is really life, for life is not determined by what one does but by why one does the things and possibly with what purpose. Scripture therefore teaches that we should not judge or regard what is before the eyes. We should regard the heart, the spiritual things. God does that too.

Ephesians 6:18
18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;
Prayer is mentioned as the final point because it serves as the introduction to “the conclusion”. The lead-in to the closing of the epistle. For prayer is spoken of through to verse 20. I believe prayer is just as much a part of this armour. To be certain, I counted the parts of this “personal standard equipment”. If you include prayer, there are exactly seven. The seventh in the series differs from the previous six and is usually the climax. That is the case here too. Prayer and supplication are synonyms, for “prayer” means “asking”. Supplication even carries the sense of asking with great emphasis. Nonetheless they are different concepts, for “prayer” has the meaning of “speaking with”. When one speaks with God, it can also be that God asks something. Prayer can therefore even be an answer to a question from God. Prayer can also be a request from man to God. It simply concerns mutual conversation. Communication. The essence of the concept of prayer is that one knows oneself to be connected with God. Otherwise one would not speak to Him. That one indeed acknowledges, respects, and submits to God as God. Otherwise there is no basis for that conversation. When we answer God, surrender ourselves to Him, we do that in prayer. In the first place with our mouth, preferably speaking aloud. Not because it must be so, but because it is symbolic. For that one must breathe. For that one must live. When you speak to God, you therefore bring your breath, your life, to God. The only reason one would not do it aloud is because other people are present and one does not want everyone to hear. Better is to withdraw in such a way that no others are present and one can therefore indeed speak aloud.
Matthew 6:6
6 But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.
Why should one withdraw for prayer? So that one can speak aloud to God. That is more difficult than just letting some thoughts pass through one’s mind. Try putting that into words. It is important that we know how to formulate what we mean. If only because we then hear our own words. With the concept of “supplication” the emphasis lies on our personal need. Then we come with

problems. Then we need something to resolve those personal matters. That supplication and asking of God one should do. “Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you” (1 Peter 5:7). And Philippians 4:6: “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God”. Supplication and thanksgiving are opposites, yet they belong together. They form one whole in the concept of “prayer” or “praying”. Thus “praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit”. The intention is that we speak to God. In some circles this is understood as speaking in tongues, but then to God. I see no sense in that, and I have never come across it in the Bible. Some understand it to mean that one does pray but does not speak the words aloud. But that is not it either. “Praying in the Spirit” is the same as “living in the Spirit”. Living from spiritual things. The goal is “watching thereunto”. Being watchful therefore, and that “with all perseverance and supplication for all saints”. One should watch in the same way as mentioned earlier in Ephesians, and also in other places, such as 1 Thessalonians 5:5–6. It concerns our consciousness, and that also means that we should not go to the Lord with trivialities. We should not occupy ourselves with trivialities anyway, but with important matters. Namely with His service. For that we should be watchful. Conscious of the day in which we live. Thus living in the light of the New Covenant, under the leading of the Spirit, and watchful because of the warfare we have. That is to say, taking care that we remain faithful to the Lord. Not letting ourselves be carried away by all sorts of things. “With all perseverance” means “that simply continues”. It means that this is our life attitude, and if you then do ask the Lord something, ask it “for all saints”. Not because it must be done, and not because you think otherwise it will not go well with the saints. Some really think: if I do not pray for it, nothing will come of it. That would mean that if I do not lay the problem before God, He does nothing. Then He forgets us. If I do not pray for the other, then God forgets the other. That is of course not so. Then what is the point of it? As children of God we do not live for ourselves. We form part of a great fellowship, and insofar as we have cares, they are the cares of the whole Church as such. I do not mean the local church again. We are members of that Body of Christ. Those cares one should bring to the Lord. Not because otherwise nothing happens, but it promotes unity. It perhaps also fixes us upon our devotion. Upon whom we actually serve. Some think: You need not worry about anything. Perhaps one need not, but we do anyway. For we bear certain responsibilities. “And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it” (1 Corinthians 12:26). Then we have something to speak with the Lord about. And that undoubtedly makes the suffering more bearable too. And even then the purpose of prayer is certainly not to urge God to action. Absolutely not. The purpose is indeed to emphasise our submission, our subjection to the Lord.

Hebrews 4:16

16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. The promise that God gives “mercy, and grace to help in time of need” is made to those who draw near to the “throne of grace”. From that people have made that

praying is henceforth drawing near to the throne of grace. Thereby the conditions mentioned there to be able to do that have suddenly disappeared. “Come boldly unto the throne of grace” is not going in prayer to the Lord; that does not stand here either. It does not say let us then pray so that we may receive help. It means that one presents one’s life, one’s body, as “a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God” (Romans 12:1). That with one’s whole life one submits to the One who sits on the throne is “coming to the throne of grace”. It concerns not forsaking “the assembling of ourselves together”, for that is also what it is called (Hebrews 10:25). God will help us “in time of need”, not when we pray, but when we serve Him. Then someone said: but if He has promised it, do I not need to ask any more? No, one need not, but on the other hand I say, where we are inclined to put our circumstances into words, we should do that in this way. Bringing to the Lord is the normal biblical thought. Further it remains a difficult subject. There are people who cannot do without prayer and make it a habit. There are people who can do very well without and do not need it so much for themselves. That depends to a large extent on our own nature, on our character. But for every one of us it applies that we should trust in the Lord.
1 Thessalonians 5:17
17 Pray without ceasing. The only conclusion I draw from that is that our whole life should in fact be a prayer. The term “pray” is used in a much broader sense in the Bible. Where in prayer we express our dependence on the Lord, that means “pray without ceasing”. That our whole life should be lived in dependence on Him. That we should always be conscious that He will care for us. We always pray for a meeting like this one, but why do we do that? We ask whether the Lord will be in our midst, surely not because we think He otherwise would not be in our midst? We know that He is, do we not? We ask that to express that we are conscious of it. To tell Him that we indeed reckon on His being in our midst, because He has promised it. It is in the first place to fix our own thoughts; what we are occupied with, and further we thus express our dependence on Him. If we ask whether He will care for us, that is not because we think He otherwise would not do it. We have His promise. He cares for you. Not on the ground of our prayer, but on the ground of our submission to Him and to His Word. For man it is good that he can sometimes tell how he stands, how it is with him, and what is going on in him. If he makes others partakers of his misery, those others are also burdened with it. In such circumstances it is more sensible to make the Lord partaker of the things that are at play. He is the only one who can really help us and who has also promised to do so on occasion, if at least we come with boldness. So not when we pray, but when we wish to serve Him.

Ephesians 6:19
19 And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel,
What is prayer and supplication “for all saints and for me” therefore about? Not so much about life circumstances as such with regard to the earthly man, but about those of children of God. It concerns service to the

Lord. Of all those other saints (= believers) we do not really know, but of Paul personally we do, for he also gives content to it, as appears from this verse. A task has been given to him—namely “to make known the mystery of the gospel”. He wants to do that “boldly”, and for that he prays. The Lord is not someone we can call upon for everything and anything and say: Lord do this or do that. And then also: not out of merit, but out of grace. What kind of image of God do people have who pray like that? What do they actually think God is? He is not our servant! Who is sent out when we send Him, and who comes to us when we call Him. Who does something when we give Him orders. No, it is completely the other way round! We should go out when He sends us. We should come to Him when He asks us. We should do when He gives us something to do. In that position we should maintain contact with the Lord. In this time people are told exactly what one must ask the Lord, because one is afraid He does not know what exactly needs to happen. We know that well, and therefore we tell Him. I am really not saying this to make jokes about it, but that is how it is. You can follow courses in that. Someone who had followed such a course said that if you want a bicycle and you ask the Lord for it, you must also tell Him whether it should have hand brakes or back-pedal brakes—and honestly—how many gears. Many think that too, even without having followed that course. I am not saying it may not be done; that is something else. But it is a bit foolish to think it must be done that way. In Romans 10 Paul prays that the Jews may be saved. What God could do about that, in principle, He had already done. What then is the one thing God can still do? Ensure that those people hear the gospel. Send someone, as is said later in the chapter. When Paul prays for the salvation of the Jews, he is therefore in fact praying whether God will send someone. Paul regards himself as the apostle of the Gentiles, who is indeed sent to the Jews. He even regards that as the glory of his ministry. Verse 13: “For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office”. Paul shows here that for the answering of a prayer one must in the first place oneself be ready to serve God, however, whenever, and wherever.

Ephesians 6:18
18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;
As verse 18 says, “praying always with all prayer and supplication for all saints”, you may indeed pray for your brothers and sisters, but if you do not serve them yourself, that is rather hypocritical. If brothers and sisters need something, you give it to them, do you not? That is point one. And if you cannot, you can always ask the Lord whether He will give. But it is not quite honest to ask the Lord to give something to someone when we ourselves could give it but do not. Prayer is not for that. When Paul prays for the salvation of the Jewish people, he cannot make it that he himself is not available to bring that gospel indeed to the Jews. For there is in fact no other way to answer that prayer. Unless it be through tribulation, for in tribulation people will sometimes seek the truth, or God. When we pray for the salvation of others, that means in the first place that we have the

responsibility to bring them the Word of God. It is pointless to pray for all the saints if we ourselves do not serve the saints. I even think we do not have the right to do so. Also in the preceding chapters it is about how we as believers should once serve the Church and contribute to the building up of the Church in every respect, in every sense of the expression. Only when that has been said does it come right at the end that one should also pray for the saints. The apostle Paul adds in verse 20 something more regarding why and for what he may be prayed for.

Ephesians 6:20
20 For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak. He is an ambassador of “the gospel” (verse 19); in that sense he was “in bonds”—that is a figure of speech for “prisoner”. And what does he ask in that position? Not to be freed from these bonds, or from this prison. He prays “that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly” (verse 19). It is therefore a highly personal matter that is spoken of here. He asks in particular for prayer because he needs boldness “to make known the mystery of the gospel”. His problem was that it was so difficult for himself to preach the things he had to preach. Not that there were no people to hear it, but people generally did not want to hear it. But he had to speak it, and it is very difficult to speak to people who do not want to hear and will not accept it. What must you then say? That makes you completely powerless. How you say it also makes little difference. They do not want to hear it anyway. That is the problem we often encounter in connection with all sorts of churches and circles. For I still sometimes hear the question: why do we never hear that then? Why do they not teach that with us? Well…, you must ask that there, not me. Then people blame the preachers, the ministers, that they never speak about certain biblical truth. I am not saying that is unjustified, but I now look at it from the other side. Then it appears that the preacher has the right, to a certain extent at least, to reproach his hearers that they do not want to hear. Both occur namely. What is cause and what effect I do not know. What the congregation does not want to hear, the preacher will not tell. Why should he? You can say it, but what sense does it make? Not much. Since it usually brings all sorts of disadvantages—it can cost the man his job—it is probably better to keep silent about it. Whose fault is it then that what must be said cannot be said? That is difficult to determine, but it lies in the attitude of both sides. The apostle speaks about his side, for some courage is indeed needed —“boldness”, as it is called—to bring certain biblical truth among people, to speak it. You will perhaps have experienced it. When you tell people certain things, they react so terribly rejecting and often hostile that it is difficult to say the things. And often that then concerns only the ordinary gospel. But the Apostle is not even speaking about that. He had already said once about that: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation” (Romans 1:16). Evidently Paul had no difficulty speaking about that. It concerns, however, making known “the mystery of the gospel”, with the emphasis on “mystery”. That concerns Church truth, and that is intended only for believers. It says that we have

been seated with Christ in the heavenlies. I once spoke somewhere and said that we have been seated with Christ in the heavenlies. The crowd immediately burst into laughter. There were students from Ichthus Christian Student Association present. I shall never forget it. They said: Where did you get that nonsense from? Er…, that stands in Ephesians… But yes, what must you do with a Bible. You must pray, then the Lord will help you, but a Bible…That says that our walk is in heaven. That says that we have a share in a heavenly calling. Or: "…the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14). That says:
"Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Colossians 3:2). That is in no case a message to man. The gospel itself is not that either, but this mystery of the gospel certainly not.
Twice in two verses the Apostle asks whether he may speak boldly about the mystery, and thereby he says that it does not always happen so. Or at least that it costs effort. Paul makes his readers partakers of his problem, that it costs him, of all people as "ambassador", the official representative of the kingdom of God, so much effort to say those things. That appears at any rate from the epistles to the Corinthians.
1 Corinthians 2:1–2
1 And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God.
2 For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.
People often think that is how it should be, but Paul says: that is not how it should be! We should preach Jesus Christ who is risen and seated at the right hand of God (among others Hebrews 1:3). But Paul could not get that across to the believers at Corinth, and that grieves him. He had problems in this area not only with the Corinthians. Later he writes from prison that he is no longer welcome anywhere. That is to say, everywhere he had formerly preached, where churches have arisen through his evangelistic labour, they no longer wanted him because of this message. It is a matter of unwillingness to hear on the part of those who should hear it. In the last part of the second epistle to the Corinthians the Apostle complains that he, who "was caught up to the third heaven, into paradise" (2 Corinthians 12:2–4), where he "heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter". These verses are generally very little understood. The thought is that "that man"—Paul—was not permitted to speak about those things the Lord had shown him there. The Corinthians simply did not allow it. God of course did not hold him back, for Paul saw and heard those things precisely so that he should speak them on God's behalf. That he could not tell the Church truths he names in verse 7 as "a thorn in the flesh, namely the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure". That concerns nothing other than the Corinthians. With them he cannot get his word across. They "sting" him. Through them he is "buffeted". Satan is behind that, and that is therefore a problem. Then he says:
2 Corinthians 12:8–10
8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.
9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is

made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.
10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong. Then we read further in verse 14: “Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you”. And then in chapter 13:1: “This is the third time I am coming to you”. On the same page in the Bible it stands twice that Paul made a third attempt to go to Corinth. And on that same page it stands that he prayed three times for “the messenger of Satan” to depart. That can surely be no coincidence. Moreover at the beginning of 2 Corinthians, it is clear that he would go to Corinth but has not been there again. The second time he was not there. If it says he prayed three times, then it must surely be clear which three occasions those were. Every occasion when he was ready again to go to Corinth, for there he expects to meet this “messenger of Satan” again, so that his visit to Corinth would then be in vain. Why did he want to go to Corinth? To make known that mystery. That had already happened, otherwise that Church would not be there. Paul wanted to speak about the resurrection of Christ and all the consequences of that for us in our present dispensation. That was what that prayer was for. Here too in Ephesians and actually in the whole second epistle to the Corinthians. But also in the first epistle. In that the hesitation of the Apostle to speak those things boldly indeed appears. His greatest problem was that he could indeed speak but not as it became him to speak. He was evidently not too convinced of that for himself, for he shares that here with the Ephesians and says besides: “Bring it to the Lord”. Pray for that, for that is what it is about.
Now we come to the very last part of the epistle. The warm greetings from Paul, for that is what it comes down to. They are personal communications. The idea behind it is that the Ephesians, and thereby believers in general, are expected to be interested in what the apostle Paul does, in particular with regard to the Church as one Body. How it goes with him. Paul does not really write about his personal circumstances, though something comes through now and then.

Ephesians 6:21–22
21 But that ye also may know my affairs, and what I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things:
22 Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts. Tychicus has more or less the commission to explain to the Ephesians how it is with the apostle. What his plans are, and so on. We do not hear much more of that. But evidently the apostle finds it important in those days that people know how things stand. We find similar things in other epistles too. The apostle Paul always has fellow travellers. They are not servants, but they do serve him. Tychicus is one of them. He is also promptly called “faithful minister in the Lord”. He is therefore involved in the service of the Lord. One part of his service is evidently delivering the epistle and giving further information regarding the practical circumstances. The chance is

moreover great that Tychicus was in the company of Onesimus. Because we read that in the epistle to the Colossians.
In Colossians 4:7–9 the same statements stand as here in Ephesians 6:21–22.
Colossians 4:7–9
7 All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellowservant in the Lord:
8 Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts;
9 With Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They shall make known unto you all things which are done here.
Tychicus, who would make known all Paul's affairs to the Ephesians, is here called "fellowservant in the Lord". Not therefore slave or servant of Paul, but together with Paul servant of Christ. Not only the Epistle to the Ephesians but also the Epistle to the Colossians were evidently delivered by Tychicus on this journey. Ephesus and Colosse were not so far from each other. It also means that these epistles, Ephesians and Colossians, were written more or less at the same time. Hence the exposition in both epistles strongly corresponds. The subject is in general the same. Even the order in which it is discussed is to a high degree alike. In Colossians we find an allusion to the circumstances in the Church at Colosse, and in Ephesians we find that not at all. It stands in Colossians 4:8 "that he might know your estate", but usually that is corrected to "that he might know my estate". That Paul wanted to make known, and thereby encourage the readers, for "comfort" here has the meaning of "encourage". In verse 9 "Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you" is connected with Tychicus. Together they would "make known unto you all things which are done here". That is of course regarding the position of Paul. Onesimus we know from the epistle to Philemon. He was the runaway slave who in one way or another came into contact with Paul in Rome and thereby came to faith. He was then sent back by Paul to his master, Philemon namely, including an accompanying letter: the epistle to Philemon.
So that in one stroke these three epistles belong together and were delivered on one and the same journey.

Ephesians 6:21–24
21 But that ye also may know my affairs, and what I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things:
22 Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts.
23 Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
24 Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen. These three epistles are thereby linked together, and that is interesting, but I can only mention it in a few words. It means that the content of the epistle to Philemon is in some way connected with the epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians. Because they were delivered

and brought together. The epistle to Philemon, however, is historically of no importance to us. For what does it matter if a slave runs away, comes to faith with Paul in Rome, and is sent back to his original position as a slave? The beauty of it is that the whole thought has a typological meaning. What happened to Onesimus happened on another level with Ephraim. That is the story of the ten-tribes kingdom, as it is worked out in the study mentioned. I do not think it is coincidence that it ended up together in the Bible like this, with such a clear connection. Partly because veiled references to it are found in both Ephesians and Colossians. In Ephesians 2 we read at any rate of Gentiles “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise”. Those are Gentiles who were formerly Israelites but who “ran away” from God. They have come to faith and been brought back to the original position—namely that of Israel.

Ephesians 6:23–24
23 Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
24 Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.
This benediction strongly corresponds with the opening of the epistle. Verse 2: “Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ”. There it concerned grace and peace, and here it concerns peace and grace. Both concepts are given further explanation. As we already saw in the discussion of Ephesians 1, peace is the usual Jewish greeting and grace the Greek greeting. In biblical terms grace and peace are the characteristics of the New Covenant and the blessings belonging to it. It is called “the covenant of peace” (Ezekiel 34:25; 37:26; Ephesians 4:3) and “the new covenant”.
Paul wishes in verse 23 “peace be to the brethren”, but immediately also “love with faith”. In verse 24 it is “grace”, and nothing more is added. Except the explanation. For that grace is wished to all those “that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity”. Those two verses are therefore structured more or less in the same way. Verse 23: “Peace be to the brethren”, and verse 24: “Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity”.
When I read verse 23, “peace be to the brethren”, I stumble over the word “brethren”. Not because it is incomprehensible what he is saying, but because it is somewhat incomprehensible that he uses precisely that word. After all, the whole epistle is written to brethren in the normal sense of the term—namely to children of God. That already stood in verse 1 of the epistle. A normal closing would then have been: “grace be with you”, for the address has long since been given. Yet it stands out that at the end of the epistle there is still a kind of address: “Peace be to the brethren”. So that one then asks whether the word “brethren” does not have a somewhat different meaning from the usual general one. In the first place the term is used to designate all believers. Then it is also used to designate all Jews. “My brethren”, Paul then says. And sometimes with: “according to the flesh” (Romans 9:3), but not always. Several times he

names someone by name in combination with “the brother”. From every context it appears that it concerns a believer, but why then is someone specifically called “the brother”? Because there the term is used in a somewhat higher and narrower sense.
Paul calls someone “the brother” to indicate that that brother stands by him in his service. They are both occupied with the same work. That is really the true meaning of brother. The word “son” means “heir”, and the word “brother” means “joint-heir”. He is therefore not only involved in the same family but in the same things, the same circumstances, possibly also the same ministry. That is also one of the reasons why believers are designated as brethren. They are joint-heirs of one and the same Father, but even more they stand together in the same ministry.
I have a strong suspicion that the apostle in this case does not mean all believers by “brethren”, but precisely those believers who are actively engaged in the service of the Lord. And why not? The last part of the epistle was at any rate about that. About practical walk of life namely, and ultimately about the good fight of faith in which we stand.
When verse 24 speaks of “all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity”, not all believers are meant by that. The intention is of course that it should apply to all believers. But that is simply not so. “Love” means in practice simply “serve”. The words are not the same, they do not mean the same, but in biblical terms they usually do mean the same. The thought is namely that loving as an activity consists in serving. “To love God” means “to serve God”. “To love one’s neighbour” means “to serve one’s neighbour”. Whoever one loves, it does not matter who, it will come to expression in service. Loving is service. That is how it is used in the Bible. With loving we would not immediately think of having a warm feeling for someone. That could be, but in the original text there is another term for that. This word “love” means in the original text, if I say it strictly, that one “stands in the right relation to that other”. Where it concerns loving God, it therefore always means that one submits to Him and serves Him in practical terms. Then you also understand what “love in sincerity” means. Fill in: “serve in sincerity”. The thought is namely that “whatsoever is done”, should be done “out of love for Jesus, that retains its value and it will endure”. That endures. That is “gold, silver, precious stones” from 1 Corinthians 3. It does go through the fire, but it endures; it is incorruptible.
Serving in sincerity is a service with meaning and value for eternity. That is a service whose effect is eternal. Unfortunately one cannot say that of all believers. So that this greeting right at the end of this epistle is not a greeting to believers in general, but specifically to those who respond to the word of this epistle. Who are conscious that they have been chosen out of this world. Who are conscious that they were foreordained to sonship. In short, who are conscious that they are blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ, and that is not nothing. For those who draw the consequences from that there is at any rate peace and grace. On the other hand it is intended for all. For however it may be, all believers should submit to the Word, as we have encountered it throughout this whole epistle. The believer who “walketh worthy of the

vocation wherewith he is called” (Ephesians 4:1) receives right at the end of the epistle “peace and grace” promised. That is for those who indeed know themselves to be the possession of the Lord and are ready to seek the things which are above (Colossians 3:1).
Amen.